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THE

Salvation Preacher,

RECOMMENDED

TO THE SERIOUS PERUSAL

OF

PREACHERS AND PEOPLE

OF ALL DENOMINATIONS.

TRANSLATED FROM THE FRENCH

BY D'OYLEY, M. A.

AND EXTRACTED BY

W. BRAMWELL,

PREACHER OF THE GOSPEL, NOTTINGHAM.

1 Tim. 4. 16. In doing this thou shalt save thyself and them that hear thee.

Col. 4. 17. And say to Archippus, Take heed—to the Ministry which thou hast received in the Lord and fulfil it.

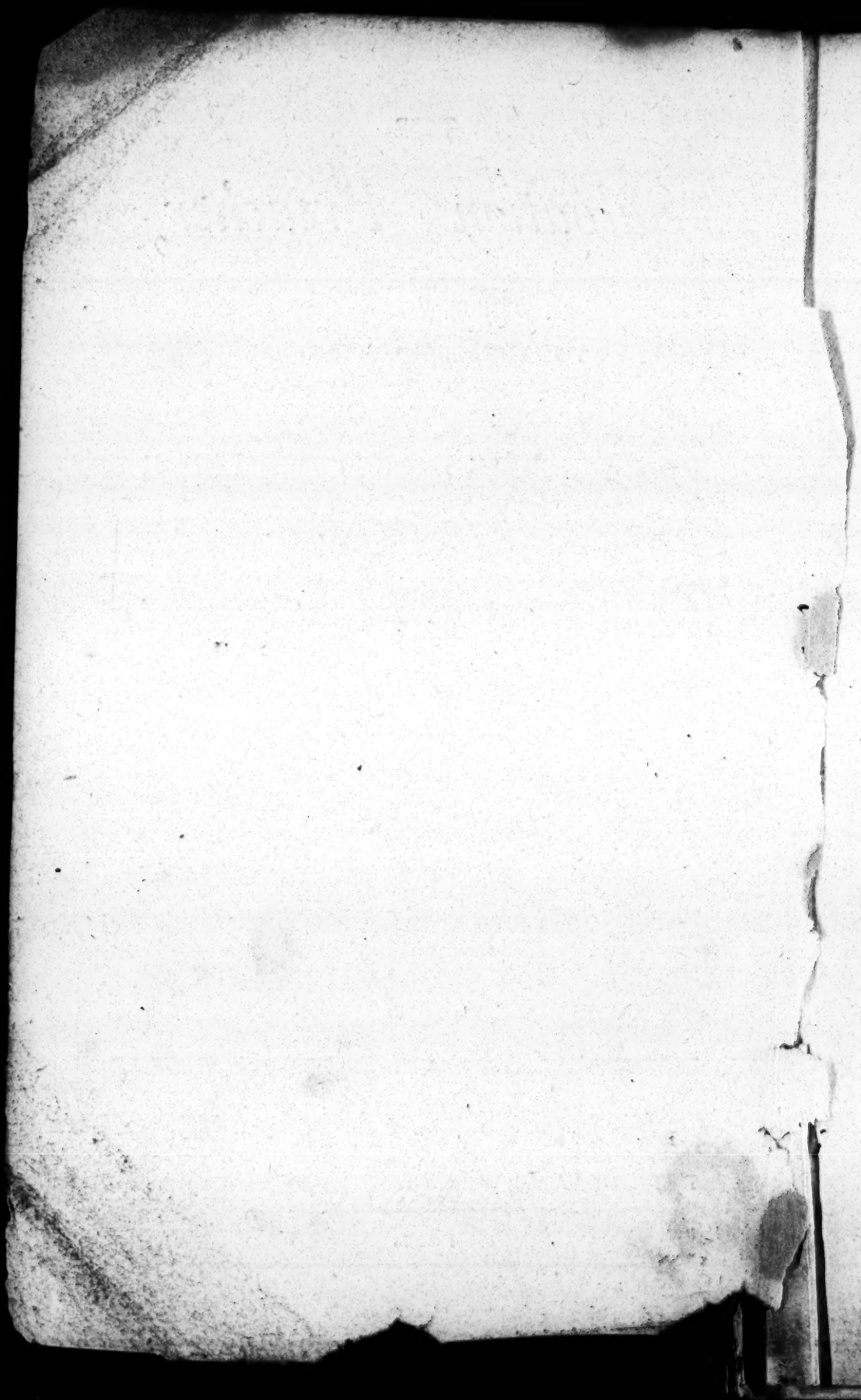
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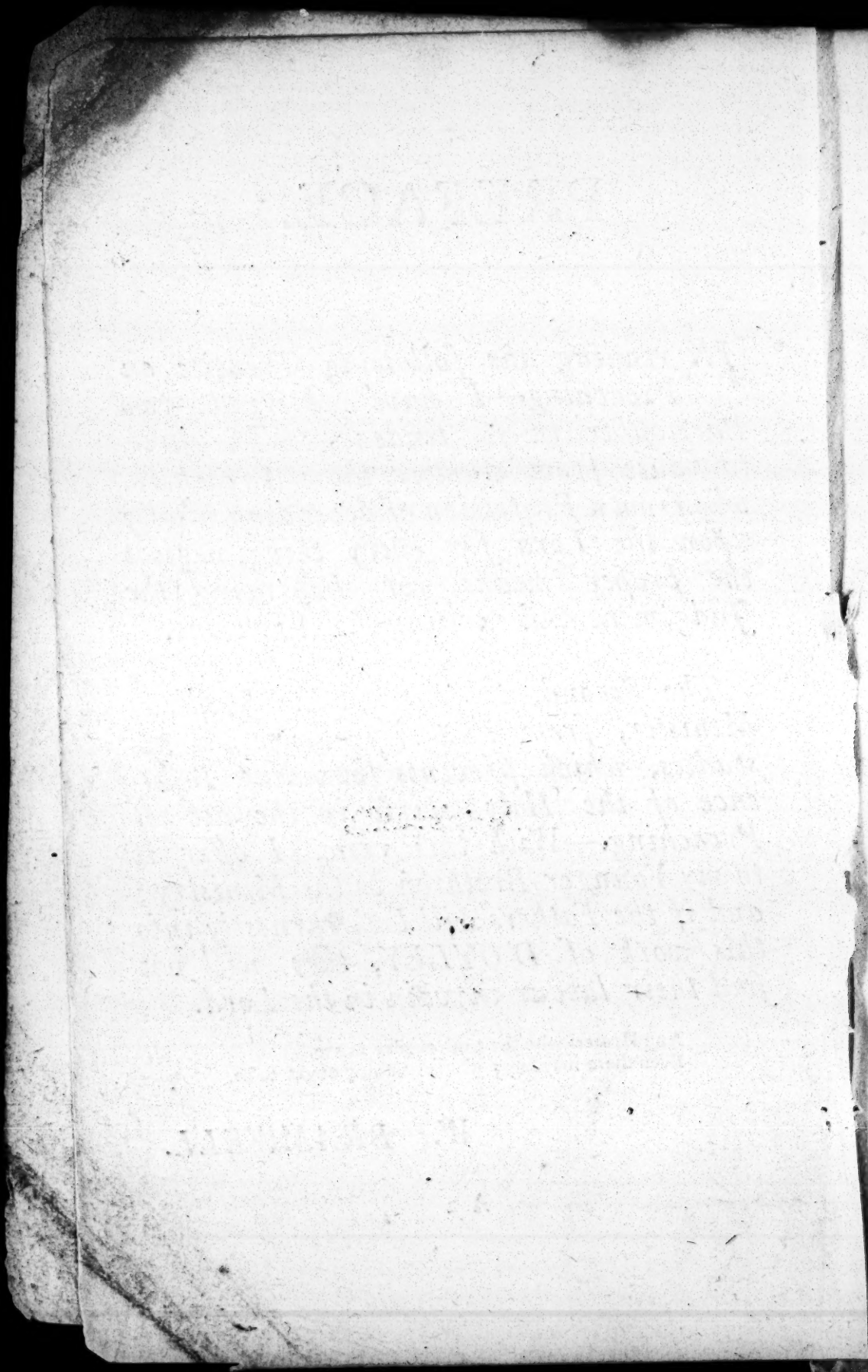
PREFACE.

IN reading the following Treatise on Preaching—I have observed two Particulars in its tendency: The first, to rouse from slumber those Preachers, who from a Profession of depending wholly upon the Lord for every thing, neglect the proper means for Improving the Judgement and exciting the Affections.

The Second, to preserve the Studious Minister, from that dependence on his studies, which prevents Immediate Influence of the Holy spirit in the act of Preaching.—With this view, I offer it to my Younger Brethren in the Ministry; and if the Fathers will look earnestly into this work of D'OYLEY, they will not find their labour in vain in the Lord.

And Hearers who the truth resolve to see,
Even these may know what Preaching ought to be,

W. BRAMWELL.



THE
SALVATION PREACHER,

Ec. Ec.

CHAP. I.

*Of the want of *Unction and Emotion in the generality of Preachers.*

THE Generality of our Preachers are either altogether without Unction and Emotion, or, if they are not entirely destitute of both, they yet give very little proof of either, except in the manner of pronouncing their discourses, which generally are very flat and insipid, and so deficient in these qualities, as to shew evidently, that the mind has more share than the heart in composing them. It is, however, necessary to enliven the productions of the purest reason, and to join heat with light. It is not sufficient to instruct a disorderly hearer; we must move him too, or all we say will be to little purpose. He is convinced of his duty, yet finds in himself no inclination to practise it. Those Preachers therefore, who aim only at satisfying the reason, are not eminent for any conversions, that are made by them.

* We have no word in our language exactly answerable to the original word *Unction*, as the meaning of it is in this place, wherein it signifies a tender and devout sense of piety.

Man, in his state of Innocence, no sooner understood what was good, but he pursued it; but his conduct is not the same since his corruption: he looks upon virtue with indifference, upon vice with pleasure; this he is often passionately fond of, though he knows his own folly in being so. What then is to be done, when we would divert him from the evil which he loves, and incline him to the good, which he abhors? Is it enough barely to shew him the deformity, for example, of detraction, and desire that he would consider it in all its colours? No, his heart must be touched, and such sentiments and emotions excited there, as may alienate him from it: at the same time that we give a clear idea, we must inspire a dislike of it: and this is not done barely by a representation of the object, we must besides understand the art of biasing the will.

Let our Preachers remember, that they are discoursing, not to persons like our first parents before their apostacy in Paradise, but to their depraved descendants. Adam and Eve were there without concupiscence, their posterity is not so. If indeed we were exempt from it, good instruction might reform us; but as we have a strong propensity to every thing that may destroy us, and an equal averesness to every thing that may preserve us, the way to make us good men, is to repel the influence of one principle by the influence of another, and overpower the force which makes us lean towards vice by another, which acts differently upon us: but this prevalency will never be effected by informing the mind, without touching it.

The Preacher in his discourse, is to imitate God in his action upon the heart of sinful man, which he first enlightens, then enlivens with his grace, and thus subdues it. But if the sermon is nothing but light, how can the preacher promise himself this success? He may indeed explain your duty to you

very intelligibly, but he leaves you at liberty to perform it or not, as you please. He shews you the place, wherein the festival is prepared, he points out to you the way to Heaven, but does not compel you to come in; there is nothing omitted by him, that only excepted, which is necessary to win upon the heart; this is without any the least motion, even then, when the mind acquiesces, and consents to every thing he says; the one is dead, while the other is satisfied to admiration. And this, because the preacher says not one word to the man, or the heart, but speaks all to his reason. His whole care is employed to make you comprehend his subject; to clear and explain it; to turn the same object several ways, and shew all its different faces; which is allowed to be very good and necessary; but when this is done, the heart is forgotten: is it surprizing then to see it remain motionless, and without impresson?

But, it will be objected, that the will is free, and may direct itself, by virtue of this liberty, whither, and in what manner it pleases. If, after due information given, it continues unactive, the fault is its own entirely; for by what other means is it to be roused? The heart is determined to the choice of good, not by any impulse, but in the way of instruction only. The preacher can do no more than represent his subject in the clearest light, argue rationally upon it, and confute the opposite errors, unless he is allowed to work mechanically upon his hearers, which has already been condemned by you.

But, without any of these sensible applications in a sermon, it may touch the passions; this is very desirable, how averse soever, some may be (for what reason I know not) to every thing that is pathetical in the pulpit. For by what new rule of unknown eloquence, is motion made an imperfection in the Christian Orator? Are not the very sentiments of his soul, as well as his reflections, expressed in his

discourse? And are not both imprinted by him on the mind, as well as on the heart of his hearers? That Preacher knows but half his power, who thinks himself only capable of instructing : for, besides this, he may implant what sentiments he pleases in the heart ; nay, he is not only able, but obliged to do so. It is not the understanding that makes us good men ; all the operations of the mind, how perfect soever they may be, will never render you deserving of God's friendship. The heart is the seat of holiness ; and the free motion of the will towards the good we are acquainted with, is that which sanctifies us here, and will hereafter save us.

Though your discourse were set off with all the lustre that is peculiar to truth, yet would it resemble a fine glass, that is cold to the touch, as well as beautiful to the eye. The light which your sermon carries with it, should be accompanied with heat, activity, and force. It should be like one of those artificial * Glasses, wherein we see ourselves as we are, and at the same time observe such a flame to be kindled by them, as is capable both of consuming and purifying the objects that they act upon.

There is nothing disgusts so much as a great deal of emotion where it is not necessary, and where nothing is said which would naturally produce it. He who exclaims and bewails himself, who thunders, and is violently transported, when his subject requires nothing more than to be delivered plainly, and without any ornament of figures, is despised by every one. To be excessively heated, when the subject will admit only of his being moderately warmed, is a kind of madness out of season, and makes him very odious and unsupportable to those, before whom he behaves himself so furiously, who are not at all moved them-

* This is an allusion to the burning glasses of a new invention, which are so contrived, that the face may be seen in them, as in a looking glass,

selves, and see no reason in the world why he should be so. Some subjects are fitted only for instruction; these therefore, are to be handled with all the evenness and tranquillity possible. There are others, and those too not a few, which cannot be discoursed on without emotion, they being in their own nature great, terrible, and affecting; in a word, such as should produce some extraordinary emotion in us, as often as we have a lively and present idea of them.

It is, therefore, a disadvantage to the truths of christianity to set them forth with coldness, and a demonstration that they make not a due impression on the preacher, who by this means evidently proves, that he neither knows how to conceive things properly, nor express them according to the order of nature; agreeable to which it is, that great objects, when they act at all, should act forcibly: in short, it is a disappointment to the just and pious expectation of the hearer. "Your discourse had begun already to raise I know not what secret emotion in my heart; I was just ready to take fire; and had you, in some particular parts of it, delivered yourself with a little more ardour and affection, I had been converted, I had given the most sincere proofs of my repentance, I had run chearfully to embrace my enemy: In this manner I expected and was wishing to be moved and excited by you; but in the midst of these my hopes, you proceed to some other point in your sermon, or conclude, and leave me very little satisfied with your eloquence; and what is worse, as indisposed to the performance of good works, as if I had never heard you. I was indeed convinced by your reasons, and upon the point of bringing forth fruits meet for repentance, yet I have produced nothing of them, because you did not sufficiently assist me." This was not the practise of St. Paul; he never abandoned his disci-

ples, till **he had traveled in birth of them, and until Christ was formed in them.* What St. Bernard said of a good life, we may say of discourses from the pulpit ; to shine, to glitter, to sparkle, without any other good effect, is to no manner of purpose ; to inflame with the heat of a mistaken zeal, or blind devotion, is of little significancy ; join light with heat, at once both to touch the heart, and convince the reason, and your business is effectually accomplished.

The affairs which relate to the town or government, to peace and war, to the fortune, life, and reputation of any man, are not to be canvassed in the pulpit ; there much more important concerns are to be treated of ; there it is that we are to speak of God, and all his infinite perfections ; of an eternal fire, and an immortal recompence of glory ; with the means of avoiding the one, and of attaining to the other. What motions must objects of this high nature excite both in the speaker and the hearer ? Is it possible to discourse coldly on such subjects, and to be content with a bare insensible proposal of these truths, and not at the same time be guilty of such an incongruity, as must contradict all the rules of speech, all the lights of reason, and all the dispositions that are inspired by zeal and piety ? In the *Athenian* or *Roman* senate, the thing debated was of no greater moment than this, *viz.* whether *Milo* were innocent or guilty, whether war was to be declared against *Philip*, and the like : yet the persons present in these disputes were moved, grew pale, trembled, and wept. Had the eternal truths of our religion been handled by *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, what strange emotions would they have stirred up ? How many tears would they have extorted from their audience.

In christianity every thing is great, even the things which appear least considerable in it, may be handled in a noble, lively and affecting manner. A

* Gal. 4. 19.

glas of cold water is in itself trivial enough ; yet, says St. Austin, when we have been speaking to the people on this subject, has not such a flame been kindled out of it, as has fired the coldest hearts, and animated them to works of mercy by the hopes of an immortal recompence.

Not that every thing we say is to be expressed in a pathetic stile ; for this would discover a great want of knowledge in the art of persuation, and an ignorance both of the heart and mind of man. The mind soon grows sick of tedious addresses to it, repeated in the same vehement strain, and the heart arms itself against those motions, which are continued too long, and with too great a violence ; instead of being melted by them, it is more obstinately hardened, and rather chilled than warmed. There are many things in a discourse, which should be spoken in an humble, moderate and easy stile, yet with a view always towards the passions. For every thing you say should gradually prepare the audience to be transported. Men do not immediately assault a place, the conquest whereof is as difficult as that is of the heart, when it resists and is unwilling to surrender ; it should be led with great address, and by degrees almost insensible to one certain point of situation ; whither, when it is conducted, it must inevitably be born away by the prevailing power of truth, the light whereof will be then perfectly discernable : then all the fire of the passions should break forth, and produce all the effect it is capable of having.

. But regard, you will say, is to be had to the weak ; we disturb the consciences of men if we affect them too much. The obdurate sinner will be never present at your sermons, if he fears he shall be pressed too earnestly upon the subject of his conversion, he is unwilling to be discomposed in the enjoyment of his pleasures. This may be, and while you attack his reason only, perhaps he will not shun you. He will

consider rather the ingenious manner in which truth is offered to him, than truth itself; because this, which is too bold a censure, is odious to him, and the way of representing it agreeable: by the help of which artifice, suggested by self-love, he will enjoy a constant tranquillity. He will hear you with pleasure, but if you undertake to move him, you will soon give him a distaste of you. A wicked man will endure well enough the light of truth, however displeasing it may be to him; it is not of itself sufficient to determine him, or oblige him to change the present indifference of his mind to good and evil. He is averse therefore to all attempts of making any impressions on his heart, for these overpower his reluctance, and drive him forcibly towards the object that is proposed to him. This is an act of violence, which the heart must be sensible of, when it is so strongly linked to any thing, and is so unwilling to go whither we would have it.

If indeed you speak to the great men of the world with vehemence and unction! if you use your utmost endeavours to penetrate their hearts, to inspire them with pious sentiments, and tender motions, with a holy joy, or salutary fear, they will presently treat you as an indiscreet zealot, and as such forsake you. But by thus abandoning you, they honour you exceedingly; their flight being a plain confession that vice cannot stand before you: And can any thing be more glorious, any commendation be more advantageous to the preacher than this, that they dare not hear him, lest they should be converted by him? The reputation of those Preachers, who are so apprehensive of disturbing the consciences of men, is much less advanced by the numerous and chosen company, that follows them; than his is, by the desertion of such persons, on an account so honourable as this is.

Have a care of being too lavish of your tears; there is always something weak, disagreeable and

mean, in excessive lamentation, something very unsuitable to the character of an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Leave this quality therefore to preachers, who have more piety than knowledge of the world, more zeal than true eloquence, and who are glad to supply the want of genius by these doleful and affecting airs. However, be never scrupulous of appearing a good man in the pulpit ; for this would be still more unbecoming than the other.

If wicked men shun an affecting preacher, good men will follow him in crouds ; which consideration only, may be matter of sufficient comfort to him : but I will venture farther to assure him, that he will attract people of all dispositions, even the most vicious. For true eloquence, sooner or later, wins upon the minds of men, and captivates their hearts : at least, it will be said by every one, the preacher does his duty, it is our part to do ours.

I cannot therefore apprehend what kind of policy this is, which we see introduced and practised in the very administration of God's word. It was utterly unknown to the Apostles, Prophets, and holy Fathers. How much earnestness may we discern in the discourses of Isaiah and Ezekiel ; how lively and pressing are the Homilies of St. Chrysostom ? By St. Paul's appointment, we should condescend to beseech and conjure sinners. Observe him in his own practice, and you will find that he never amused himself or others with a vain kind of rhetoric ; by what he says, you may judge easily that he was filled with a divine spirit, which communicated such a power and efficacy to his discourses, as transported the hearts of all men, and triumphed over their corruption. " I, says he,* the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called ; with all lowliness and meekness, with

B

* Ephes. 4. 1, &c.

“long-suffering, forbearing one another in love,
 “endeavouring to keep the unity of the spirit in the
 “bond of peace.” And in another place; * “But
 “thou art inexcusable, O man, whosoever thou art,
 “that judgest; for wherein thou judgest another,
 “thou condemnest thyself; for thou that judgest
 “doest the same things. And thinkest thou, O man,
 “that judgest them which do such things, and doest
 “the same, that thou shalt escape the judgment of
 “God? Or despisest thou the riches of his goodness
 “and forbearance and long-suffering, not knowing
 “that the goodness of God leadeth thee to repen-
 “tance? But after thy hardness and impenitent heart
 “treasurest up unto thyself wrath against the day of
 “wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of
 “God.” “Woe unto them,” says the prophet
 Isaiah,† “that decree unrighteous decrees, and that
 “write grievousness, which they have prescribed; to
 “turn aside the needy from judgment, and to take
 “away the right from the poor of my people, that
 “widows may be their prey, and that they may rob
 “the fatherless. And what will ye do in the day of
 “visitation, and in the desolation which shall come
 “from far? To whom will ye flee for help? And
 “where will ye leave your glory?”

CHAP. II.

Of views foreign to the ministry of the word.

THE design, doubtless, of the preacher is to turn
 his hearer from evil, and incline him to good.
 However, let us not be too inquisitive into the hearts
 of all those, who take upon them this office, lest some

* Rom. 2. 1, &c.

† Isaiah 10. 1, &c.

Should be found, who, while they seem to preach Jesus Christ, preach themselves only. Let us reflect impartially upon the motives which influence us, and upon all the ends which we propose in the exercise of our ministry; perhaps it will appear, that we are animated by some other spirit, than that of Christian zeal alone.

There are some, we must confess, who preach only for preaching sake; something they must be busied about, and they are content it should be this. Ask them if they design to root out the errors, and reform the vices of wicked men, and if they speak sincerely, they will answer you, that this is what they never disturb themselves about; that they preach, and for any thing more, they pretend not to it: as for the rest, let every one profit as they can by it. What can be expected from a man, who composes a sermon, and delivers it with this unconcernedness? Suppose his subject to be avarice, can you think he is at all concerned for the salvation of such covetous persons as may hear him? Not in the least. He chuses this matter to discourse upon without any other view: They therefore who bring this vice with them into the assembly, return as fond of it as ever. These are men without either good or bad intentions; if any thing is said in commendation of their performance, they receive it with pleasure, but are not very desirous of it. They talk and beat the air, but all they say is mere empty sound: as they are without zeal, so they are without ambition: they labour neither for the glory of this world, nor of the next; and are content to be of no farther use, than to make up the number of preachers.

Others there are, who undertake the employment of the pulpit with designs altogether prophane: they are fond of producing themselves, are impatient to get a name, and to distinguish themselves in the eyes

of the world : for which purpose, the pulpit is, they think, a very proper theatre. How many are there, who preach only with the hope of making their fortune, of procuring patrons, or of winning the esteem and confidence of the ladies, to satisfy the spirit of avarice or vanity, and that it may be publicly said, This is an ingenious, polite man, an agreeable actor, &c. These all are vices quite foreign to the business, and often give men a very ill taste of eloquence. If it is his particular intention to appear learned, and profoundly versed in the sciences, it generally happens, that his sermons are made up of unprofitable citations heaped injudiciously one upon another, or of obscure speculations, that no one is concerned in. If he sets up for the reputation of a wit, of a well-bred man that understands the world, his discourses are generally mere tinsel, without any solidity, his expressions affected, his stile too exact and stiff.

This I dare venture to affirm : Have no other ends in view, than what properly relate to your employment as a preacher, and you will soon experience the success of them. A good taste certainly follows the correction of a bad one, and when it is reformed, you will consider only the solidity of what you have to say : you will embellish truth no farther, than is necessary to give it a more easy admission with your hearers, the ornaments you make use of, will be masculine, simple and natural, such as will not enervate, but enforce it, and serve only to set it forth clearly, and in its full light. Every thing that served only to excite the admiration of an injudicious audience, and to have wonders spoken of the preacher's wit, learning, and politeness, will be all sacrificed without mercy. It is true, he will endure very cruel struggles, before he can determine with himself to give up to many sparkling thoughts, though it be for the salvation of his hearers. We are naturally in love with our own notions, and with those, above all

others, which are bright and glitter. These are the children we are most passionately fond of, as the most beautiful in the eyes of our own vanity ; once more, therefore, I say, that this is a severe sacrifice made to our self-love. Our bias lies most this way, and strongly inclines us to shine in this manner, especially in the first fire of youth ; so that we conceive nothing to be well written which has not something of this lustre. We never begin to reform our ill judgment, till we have a taste of true eloquence, and propose that as our only end, which every Christian orator should aim at ; which is, to allure men to virtue, and deter them from vice ; to make impression on their hearts, and convert them. As we are composing our sermons, certain turns, expressions, and reflections, from time to time rise within our minds, the blaze whereof deceives and dazzles us ; but we must be deaf to their most alluring charms, do violence to our nature, and accustom ourselves gradually to reject them, and according to the Prophet's advice, to *dash these little ones without pity against the stones.*

Wherein is it, think ye, that Demosthenes, in the judgment of all ages, has born away the prize of eloquence, which so many rivals disputed with him in the Athenian Senate ? Had he more wit, or a greater genius than they ? Perhaps not ; but the end he aimed at was more noble : He had no other view in his harangues, but the advantage of his country ; this was the first spring that moved him ; from this proceeded the solidity, strength, and irresistible reason, which so remarkably appeared in his orations. In short, this was it which made him the most celebrated orator of Greece ; while others, who endeavoured only to please and flatter the Athenians, and procure a vain applause, were never able to attain to any higher merit and reputation, than that of sophists and declaimers.

I could wish with all my heart, that you could with Plato, give yourselves this testimony ; “ my discourses are not composed with a design of pleasing, it is my study rather to say that which is best, than that which is most agreeable.”

If some particular preachers had no other intention than to convert their hearers, their sermons would be very different from these, for which, however they are admired, they would be without that profusion of flowers, which appear so visible in every page. They would, indeed, have less of the applause and admiration of the world, but they would be better preachers.

That is not always best in a discourse, which excites admiration. For when we admire, we suppose only that the object is new, or seems so, not that it is good. We may say therefore, what may be thought a paradox, that the hearers may have reason to admire some particular passages of a sermon, though they are very opposite to good sense and reason. For the same cause, it is frequently enough observable, that what at first was admired, is soon after condemned. Applause and acclamations are not always certain proofs of a sublime eloquence ; the murmurs, which are the marks of the approbation of an audience, are excited often by the ornaments peculiar to the middle sort of eloquence. Whereas the sublime in a manner stifles, and suppresses the voice of the assembly ; it commands an awful silence, and makes the hearer immovable. Of this we have a very remarkable example in St. Austin. There had been a civil war for a long time raging in a city of Africa, the inhabitants whereof, upon some particular solemn days in the year, divided themselves, as it were, into two bodies, and engaged very warmly with stones. The conflict was always bloody, and never failed of being fatal to some of the combatants. St. Austin undertook to abolish this brutal custom ;

he ascended the pulpit, and displayed there all the art of his rhetoric. Every one was charmed to hear him speak so finely, and expressed their pleasure in the greatest acclamations. Yet all this did but afflict him, and make him the more sensible, that still he was very far from the sublimity of Christian eloquence; which he then believed he had attained to, and not before, when he saw the applause of the assembly succeeded by their sighs and tears.

The country has for some time had the advantage of a perfect model of this sublime and pathetic eloquence in the person of one of our most celebrated preachers. And where, indeed, is there to be found a more lively and well governed imagination, one more fertile or more happily daring, a more elevated genius, and a more noble facility both of conception and expression? This concurrence of so many eminent qualities tends all to, and terminates in, the sublime, the tender, and pathetic. Both the preacher and his uncommon talents are forgotten, while the heart is taken up entirely with the impressions which he has made upon it. Instead of amusing themselves with exclamations, his hearers think on nothing but following, or rather without thinking, follow the rapid torrent of motions and impressions which are excited by him, and bear down all repugnancy in the soul to virtue.

There is an applause which proceeds from actions, and not from words; and this it was which St. Chrysostom desired. "To what purpose, said he to his audience, are all the marks of your approbation? The greatest advantage I hope for from my discourse is, not your praises but your reformation: In this I should place all my glory, and would prefer your conversion to a crown." That applause, which is expressed in action, is an almost infallible proof of true eloquence; the other, which is demonstrated in words only, is a very equivocal one. I am

very well pleased, said the Roman orator, to hear it said, as often as I speak publickly, *This is fine, nothing can be better; but I do not care to have it repeated too often.* The hearer should not be always, no, nor long in his fits of admiration, lest he grow sick of it. If the orator is a master in his art, some parts of his discourse will be so prudently composed, that there shall be no room for admiration. There will be intervals, at which the hearer may pause, and recover himself out of his astonishment. Obscurity and shade are pleasing to the eye, after it has been dazzled by any great light. Excessive pleasure is soon followed by disgust; when it is moderated, it may be longer enjoyed without satiety. Thus it is likewise with the great beauties of eloquence, if they are not distributed with sobriety and discretion, they surfeit, and grow loathsome. I had rather hear a discourse indifferently good, than one, which from the beginning to the end, without any interruption, is equally wonderful and fine. For whatever so far pleases, as to transport us, makes a violent impression on the soul; and every impression of this nature, how agreeable soever it may be, if it be not short, becomes very soon tedious. Are then the praises, some will say, that are bestowed upon the Christian orator, to be imputed to him as a crime? And is it a just consequence to conclude, that a man preaches ill, because he is applauded by his audience? To this I answer, that I am far from making it criminal in the preacher to be commended, provided he be so for such passages of his discourse as merit it. I answer farther, that as it is no good consequence to say, he preaches ill, because he is commended; so neither is it to say, he preaches well, for the same reason.

He is indeed an excellent preacher, who knows how to affect his hearers in such a manner, that they observe not whether he speaks with politeness, wit, learning, majesty, or gracefulness, but are entirely

taken up with the things he is saying, and with the impressions that these things make upon them. If they think on the preacher, and speak any thing to his advantage, it must proceed only from reflecting thus with themselves; I am very sensible, that this person has persuaded, convinced, and touched me; he is therefore without question an ingenious man, and a great preacher. The consequence is very good, and the commendations of this kind are no way unworthy a christian orator. On the contrary, they are a just tribute, which no reasonable hearer ever fails to pay true eloquence.

In a sermon, every thing should be expressed with a regard to the audience, not to the preacher. For the pulpit is a place, wherein we are to preach, but not to preach ourselves. At every word and period that we write down, we should ask ourselves this question; will this turn the thoughts and attention of the audience upon myself? If it will, let me strike it out. Were sermons to be reformed after this method, how many of those which are admired and applauded, would be reduced to nothing.

A sermon is a kind of a feast, at which every thing should be furnished, that may be acceptable or beneficial to the hearer; but this order is confounded, and the preacher eats plentifully and deliciously, while the hearer is dying with hunger: nay farther, he who should be present at this entertainment with no other design, but to nourish himself with the bread of God's word, goes to it frequently for no other end, but to feed the vanity of the preacher with his praises. As the preacher in composing his sermon considered himself only, and his own glory; so the audience, while he is pronouncing it, considers only the preacher, and is continually meditating on him, in frequent exclamations in terms to this purpose: O how well he speaks, how finely he thinks, how gloriously he expresses himself! But as a good preacher fixes

all our attention upon ourselves, so a bad one draws it off, and diverts it from ourselves upon other objects.

CHAP. III.

Of the neglect of the end peculiar to the Christian Orator.

THIS disorder, which may be termed the jest of christian eloquence, proceeds from nothing else, but the neglect of that end, which alone the preacher should propose to himself. For if you would have the attention of the hearer employed solely on himself, and not at all on you; you also, in the composition of your discourses, must not think at all upon yourself, but on him wholly, and of the ways, whereby you may engage him to a love of virtue and an aversion to vice; how you may touch him, convert him, and procure his eternal salvation; you will say every thing with a view to his benefit, and nothing to gratify your own vanity.

Is it not then allowable for the preacher to study how he may express himself lively, nobly and politely, in agreeable turns, and in a pleasing and insinuating manner? It were to be wished he would not too much endeavour to do this: the vigour of the mind is so exhausted in a laborious choice of terms, in ranging and disposing words and phrases, that the matter is neglected. But if the preacher were possessed with a true sense of his ministry, and of the proper end of it, all this would come naturally, and without thinking.

When we are inflamed with an ardent zeal for the salvation of our neighbour, and sincerely desire to convert him, expressions of themselves crowd in upon us; the heart yields a more than necessary supply of them, and of such too, as are more beautiful, more elegant and sprightly, than the utmost application can furnish.

But you have my consent to consider, as much as you please, how to speak handsomely, to express yourself nobly, and to give a proper turn to every thing; for this is all very consistent with the character of a christian and apostolical preacher; and I should be sorry to have you fall into this popular error, that to think coarsely, and to express yourself in a rustic manner; to speak without art or method, without figure or ornament, nay, often without reason, and against good sense, is to preach like an Apostle. St. Paul sure discoursed as became an apostle, yet he made use of all these advantages; St. Chrysostom too preached like an Apostle, but with what purity of language, what beauty of style, what variety of turns, what elegance of figures?

Let your elocution be pure and simple, such as is fit to represent clearly what you have to say. Be accurate, but natural in your language, never curious or affected. A too earnest desire to speak well, is almost always the occasion of speaking ill. Lay aside all uncommon expressions, and such as are little known in conversation. Too great delicacy and exactness in the choice of words is blameable. A woman of Athens hearing the polite and elegant Theophrastus, discovered immediately that he was no native of Athens, because he made too much use of the Attick dialect. Accustom yourself to speak in such a manner, as it may appear plainly by your words, that you are no foreigner naturalized. If the preacher be born and educated at a distance from the city, it is very difficult, I confess, for him to be

perfect in such way of speaking and pronouncing as is peculiar to it. For what sort of language is that which Cicero calls a tincture and colour of urbanity? How to describe it he could not tell, only this he knew, that there was such a thing. When you are in Gaul, says he, speaking to Brutus, you will easily perceive it; there you will hear many words and several phrases which are not in use at Rome; the way to remedy this, is to forget them, and in their room to substitute others which are in use: then you will discern better than at present you can, how much sweeter the words are, and more agreeable to the ear in ours, than in the mouth of foreign orators. This is that strange perfection, which, with all their endeavours, they never can attain. Witness Theophrastus, whom we just now mentioned, who asking a woman of Athens, how she sold her goods, was answered by her, O stranger, I cannot part with them to you at a lower rate. He was surprized and displeased at this reply, understanding by it, that there was a foreign accent in his pronounciation, which he had not yet conquered, though he was otherwise a very fine speaker, and had been many years an inhabitant of Athens. So true is it, that a stranger, how polite soever he may be, does one way or other, always discover himself.

A young preacher therefore who has been brought up at a distance from the town, is to study how to correct and soften; as well as possibly he can, those particular defects in pronounciation, that are inseparable from the place he was born in. For if he should pretend to make himself master of the ingenious turns, the delicacy, the grace, and atticism of language, he would but flatter himself in vain, and would infallibly fall into affectation; which is a danger in this particular, of all others to be most dreaded. For let him consider well, and be persuaded, that rusticity of language is always less offensive, than a

what would have been the best of the whole composition : Such is the almost inevitable effect of these fine divisions.

Division, it is true, is an essential part of a discourse ; I do not mean that division, which is express and sensible, but that which is artfully concealed, and is insensible ; this only is absolutely necessary to eloquence. For it is nothing else, as has already been observed by me, but the distribution of the subject into all its parts, according to that natural order wherein they stand related to each other. The ancient orators never failed to make use of it in their discourses. They indeed who are not accustomed to this artificial and delicate kind of division, are scarce able to discern it : The discourses of the greatest masters of eloquence seem to them without any just disposition, or contrivance. But if they would look nearly, and with attention, they would discover both in the most exquisite degree ; they would observe a natural consequence of those truths and reasons which are laid open by these eminent hands, and an almost insensible connection of the one with the other. When the mind has once a relish of this order, which is proper to conceal the art of the composer, it can scarce be reconciled to those vulgar transitions from one point to another, which cast a damp upon all that fire, which had been kindled by the preacher.

Would you then have us, you will say, entirely lay aside all those divisions, which have so long prevailed among us in the pulpit ? I confess, I would. At least, I should be glad they never would appear, unless they are very simple and natural, and such as the very subject itself offers. I think I am not without good grounds for what I say : For is there not reason to exclude that from being a part of eloquence, which all antiquity, both prophane and sacred, has

rejected? That which gives it such an air of constraint, and so much enervates it? I have seen many persons of very good judgment, who have been of my opinion on this article. Father C. whose sermons have been so well received by the public, has often said in my hearing, that he saw nothing so contrary to sound eloquence as these divisions. He made use of them indeed, but only to comply with custom, and to obey a law of so commanding a power as that of the fashion. However, he took the liberty from time to time to ease himself of this burthen, as appears by some of his sermons, which certainly are not the least beautiful of his compositions: And he would entirely have freed himself from this servitude, if heaven had not taken him from us, almost in the flower of his age, and at a time, when he was preparing to charm the court after that great applause which he had gained universally all over the city. If you ask at what time, and for what reasons the use of these divisions was at first introduced in the pulpit, you will be answered, that they obtained as true eloquence degenerated, and at a time, when they who took upon them to speak in public, had no knowledge of the rules, which had been left us by the old masters in the art of fine speaking, and professed not to have any commerce with them. They owe their original to an ill-taste, and are produced by that corruption of eloquence. Men are willing to ease the memory, and supply their barrenness of genius, and want of invention; which is all done, and a discourse made with very little labour by the help of these arbitrary divisions. They confine themselves to general and indefinite propositions, upon which they spend some time in reasoning; which serves to swell the paper book, and fill up the hour; but as for entering deep into their subject, or clearing and exhausting it, this is what they readily dispence with.

However, you will say, these divisions seem useful and necessary, nor do I believe either that the preachers will ever consent to lay them aside, or that the hearers can be well without them. For is not the mind and imagination of the audience to be fixed? And how can this be done, but by representing some determinate points, which they are to stop at, and never to lose sight of? Would you have them always dubious and uncertain as to what you have to say to them? Should you not ease them the trouble of a too tiresome and intense application, which is necessary to discover this almost imperceptible order and series of the discourse, and which, however the common people, who make up the greatest number, are not capable of? Is not the hearer's attention to be relieved, some moments to be allowed for breathing, some small time for the unbending of his mind, which may thus recover new strength, and be disposed for farther attention? Few minds are capable of an hour's application, if never interrupted. Lastly, is it not necessary too that the preacher himself should have a little respite, and allow some intermission to the vehemence of his action.

The ancient orators must certainly have had stronger and more robust bodies, and better lungs than those of our days, since we cannot observe that they stood in need of all these refreshments, which are taken by our preachers. They were fitter, if I may venture to express myself so, to run the noble race of eloquence, who never stopped till they arrived at the goal. The people likewise whom they spoke to must have had more understanding, and more penetration than those of our age; since the orator was not obliged to lead them by the hand, and shew them distinctly every step he had taken, or was still to take. He was excused the pains of crying without ceasing in their ears, here is my first point, there is

my second, this is my third, &c. at present I shall dispatch this head of my discourse, by and by I shall proceed to the other. To make them comprehend what was already said, or what still remained to say, it was sufficient, without any of these intimations, barely to say it.

I can, however, scarce persuade myself that St. Chrysostom, St. Basil, &c. had better or stronger lungs than some preachers of our days, or that the people of Antioch, Cæsarea or Constantinople, were more refined, or of a quicker apprehension, than the people of Paris, or of the other principal cities in the kingdom. But, no matter. I am very willing that both the preachers should relieve themselves, and give some respite to their hearers. Cannot this be done without the assistance of divisions? Cannot the preachers stop, breathe, repose themselves, and give their hearers at the same time leisure to do so too, at some particular places of their discourse, without interrupting the thread of it in the least by these pauses and little intervals, and without the least relaxation of the preacher's action, or of the hearer's attention? I am apt to think, that it was thus the ancient orators relieved themselves during the painful exercise of a long pronounciation. Could not the mind and imagination of the hearer be fixed at the beginning by a short and distinct analysis of the discourse, pointing out particularly beforehand to them the whole order, sequel, and disposition of it? This method to me seems excellent. Is it not possible in order to refresh their memory and attention, to shew them by some little hint the passage from one proposition to another? This is such a concession to the weakness of the people, as is allowed by eloquence: They have no room therefore to complain that it is troublesome to follow the preacher, that they are not able to perceive what he drives at, or what course he proposes to pursue; and that the order of his discourse is so little to be

discerned, that the most constant and active attention cannot go along with it. What if sermons were reduced into a shorter compass than is at present usual? Would not this give ease to an audience? If they cannot be attentive for a whole hour, they may very well for three quarters, without being thought to have a very passionate concern for things relating to eternal life. By making your discourses of a reasonable shortness, you would be less fatiguing both to yourselves and others; and by this means, in my opinion, remedy all the inconveniencies, that may arise from the want of these divisions. If, after all that I have said, you would have the pleasure of seeing an example of this liberty, which in itself is so amiable, and so suitable to true eloquence, cast your eyes on this passage of St. Chrysostom, taken out of the thirty-first Homily on St. Matthew, where he undertakes to shew that to lament excessively the death of those persons, who are dear to us, is contrary both to faith and reason.

“ Let none, says he, hereafter bewail the dead, or
 “ any more pity their condition : Let them remem-
 “ ber that Jesus Christ is risen, and no more dishonour
 “ that victory which he has so gloriously obtained
 “ over death. For what reason should you thus
 “ unprofitably give way to sighs and tears, since death
 “ is now no more than a long sleep, out of which we
 “ shall again awake? Why should you suffer your-
 “ selves to be overwhelmed with sorrow? In a heathen
 “ indeed, it may seem excusable to be afflicted on these
 “ occasions; but in a christian, all excess of grief is
 “ criminal, it is a weakness, for which there can be no
 “ apology, since the resurrection has been established
 “ by such clear proofs, and by the consent of so many
 “ ages. Yet, methinks you take pleasure to quicken
 “ and enliven your affliction. You bring heathen
 “ women to weep themselves over your dead friends,

“ and excite you to do the same with greater violence.
 “ You take no notice of St. Paul, who says to you
 “ What fellowship has the believer with the unbe-
 “ liever? The very Pagans, who have neither be-
 “ lieve nor hope in a resurrection, have yet argu-
 “ ments ready to comfort their friends in these sad
 “ accidents.”

We perceive certain negligencies here and there in particular places of the discourse, which serve to take off the very appearance of constraint and affectation. Such negligencies as these are sometimes the work of great application, and are so much the more laboured, as they appear to be less so. These very often are the places which please most; they shew that the preacher has been more solicitous about things than words, and every intelligent and reasonable hearer will be certainly of opinion, that this is extremely becoming the Preacher; like those women, who appear infinitely to an advantage in an undress. Where do we find any of those starched phrases, those measured periods, or elaborate and well turned divisions, which fetter eloquence and keep it in a kind of bondage? Nothing of all this appears in St. Chrysostom. He proceeds insensibly in the continuation of his discourse, from one truth and reflection to another; yet he every where breathes an air of freedom, yet he confines himself within due bounds; and thus it is he excels all others in so happy and agreeable a mixture of what is exact, and yet unconstrained.

CHAP. VI.

Of the Novelty suitable to the Eloquence of the Pulpit.

AS our eyes are struck and pleased with the sight of that, which they never saw before, so is the mind charmed with novelty, and allured with the delight which it produces. But how can the preacher give this grace to his discourses? The subjects on which he is to speak, are as old as religion, known by all the world, and have been heard an hundred times, such as judgment, heaven and hell, &c. The matter of a sermon never can be new, no, nor even appear so: And without doubt it is a disadvantage to the preacher to labour continually on beaten subjects familiar to every one; to which the ear, the mind and the heart of auditors are equally accustomed. Pleaders at the bar have in this the better of the pulpit orators; they have affairs upon their hands from one time to another, that are in their nature perfectly new, upon which they may exercise and recommend their talents.

Novelty of doctrine is still less allowable in a preacher; of what kind soever it may be, it should be banished the pulpit, and whoever is so bold as to introduce it in that place, deserves himself never to appear there more. The very shadow of it is in this point to be avoided: Let no other doctrine come ever from your lips, but that which carries with it the always venerable air of antiquity.

But it may be asked, whether we may not endeavour to seem new by a shew of extraordinary severity. I answer, that if your severity goes not beyond

the bounds of evangelical truth, you may appear this way with as much novelty as you please ; but when it exceeds these limits, it is condemned by the gospel.

Will it then never be allowed the preacher in any part of his discourses to set them off with an air of novelty ? Yes, it will. For, in the first place, the design may be new. By the design, I mean the division, order and ranging of the matter which we treat of. It is adviseable not always to follow the beaten road, but to make yourselves a new one, provided it does not lead you out of the way. What a mean and servile thing is it, neither to desire, nor know how to tread, but in the footsteps of another. It is a very wretched business to copy only after others : He who can do this only, was never made for so noble and glorious a ministry as that of the christian orator. - Exalt your soul, and have at least so good an opinion of yourself, as to believe you may be an inventor, and see something with your own eyes, which has never been discerned by others. Invention and boldness is necessary in eloquence, to be happy in them is all. Let it be your endeavour to find out some new method of dividing your discourse, which has never yet been produced ; range your matter in a new order, and lay it before your hearers in such a view, as hitherto it has not appeared in to them : But in doing all this, you should always preserve an inviolable regard to nature, reason and good sense. For I will venture to affirm, that the most natural and reasonable disposal of what you have to say, will always seem the newest, because it is that which is most rarely observed.

In the second place, the things which the preacher speaks of may be new. The religious subjects, which are treated of from the pulpit, are inexhaustible, and partake of the nature of their object. Though all the knowledge we have of them were multiplied

common terms you attribute a sense to them entirely new ; which applications should be made without study, for that has something of constraint and affectation ; and which I know not what impetuosity of genius, whereby, in order to represent our thoughts more nobly and lively, the natural and common signification of some particular expressions is varied, and new images annexed to them, by which alteration they acquire a signification that before they had not. Preachers of a piercing and elevated wit, who aim with all their power at the pathetic and sublime, are those only who succeed well in new expressions : A heavy or moderate genius will never arrive at this perfection.

In the sixth place, the turns in our discourses may be new. The mind indeed can supply but few of them, and those very limited. The orators who have gone before us have exhausted them, and have scarce left any thing to do after them, but to gather some gleanings. Instead thereof of being curious in embellishing your works with them, you should as much as possible lay them aside ; for by being frequently produced, they are quite worn out, and decayed. But your own heart is such a copious spring of new turns, as is never to be dried up. Leave it to its own motions, and a thousand different turns will be imprinted on your thoughts, which will strike you so much the more advantageously, and please you, as they appear so much the more natural and new.

In the seventh place, our sentiments may be new. Of these the heart affords an endless store : From hence it is that they should descend into the discourse ; if at least you would give it such an affecting and persuasive air, as never fails to make impression. We should judge of new sentiments, as of new thoughts ; for they consist not in feeling what men are not commonly sensible of, or in feeling that which

they are sensible of differently from other men. Such a novelty of sentiments would be very strange, and indeed something monstrous. Have such a sense of what you say at the bottom of your own heart, as every one ought to have ; and impress all you feel, on what you say, and you will appear very new to your whole audience : Because the preacher has very rarely such a sense of things as he ought to have, and has less frequently the skill to express it well.

Lastly, the applications may be new. All the places of scripture or the fathers, which may serve as proofs or ornaments to the Truths of christianity, have not yet been exhausted. How many thoughts, sentiments and expressions are there, which may be considered like so many diamonds, that want only to be set. The works of scripture and the holy fathers resemble vast gardens, where you may always gather some new flower, when therefore you run them over, have a care how any escape either your eyes or hands. Allegorical and distorted applications were once much in fashion ; and made up one of the finest ornaments of the pulpit ; the preachers disputed who should use most of them, and he who had the better in this contest was most admired : At present men have a different taste, and scarce any applications of scripture are permitted but in a proper and natural sense. If sometimes we take the liberty to enliven a discourse with such applications as have more lustre than solidity, we can never do it with too much caution and reserve ; lest while we attempt to shew our wit, we betray a want of discretion, as well as an immoderate desire to please and sparkle. ;

CHAP. VII.

Of the Variety essential to Eloquence.

IF novelty is of so wonderful an advantage to eloquence, variety when rightly used is no less serviceable to it ; in this point, as in every thing else, eloquence perfectly resembles nature, from which if you take away its variety, you rob it at the same time of all its grace and beauty. Were there but one object in the universe for our contemplation, though in its present state we view it every day with new pleasure, we should certainly then soon grow weary of it. A garden filled throughout with flowers of one sort only would make no very agreeable entertainment. Our eyes love to wander upon different objects, and to see a multitude of things at one glance, but cannot be fixed long upon the same object. Thus likewise we may observe, that the mind is then most pleased, when it is entertained continually with something new : whereas, if its attention is placed too long upon the same thing, it grows weary and is surfeited. Heaven has given it an infinite thirst after knowledge, and this passionate longing is in some measure satisfied by the multiplicity of objects that it is amused with : If therefore you would please without being tedious to your hearers, remember always to set off your discourses with this agreeable variety, which nature herself requires as an ornament for them.

Diversify your stile. A different stile and a stile diversified are two distinct things. A discourse written

in a different stile is a very bad one, and let your stile be ever so diversified, still it must be always the same, I mean it must seem to come always from the same hand, and the same pen, and to keep always, as I may say, the colour of the spring from whence it flows. Suppose a river ever so large, still is the same river; but what a difference may be observed in its course? Here we see it flow in a broad spacious channel, then in one narrower and more contracted: In one place it creeps slowly on, in another it runs with rapidity: Sometimes its waters glide gently and without noise; at other times again the murmuring of its waves is heard amidst the rocks, which seem to set themselves in opposition to its passage. The banks which are watered by its streams, are not equally agreeable and fruitful, and the nearer it approaches to the sea, the more precipitate is its course. Herein you have a model, or rather a true image of that variety, wherewith your diction should be embellished.

Let your stile be sometimes great, noble and elevated; sometimes humble, low and level with the ground, but never mean and creeping; at other times let it be smooth, even and harmonious to the ear, but take care it loses nothing of its gravity and strength by its harmony and sweetness. Sometimes again let it be confused and without order, number or measure; in certain particular places it should be close and exact, in others more copious and diffuse; here flowers should grow and there thorns; that is to say, it should not always be florid. When it has borne down every thing with its vehemence it should become easy, moderate, and calm, but still keep itself up from sinking, and languishing; and what nature soever you are pleased it should be of, still it should be lively and sprightly; generally indeed severe and grave, but at intervals a little more soft and easy. Take care that it improves still upon your hands, and

in proportion as you come nearer to the end of your discourse let its rapidity and force encrease. In short, conform your stile to the things you have to say, and it will have an agreeable variety.

An uniformity of stile is the sure way to make it tedious. In some discourses I have scarce read two pages before I begin to be sick; the stile is indeed always beautiful, gay, pompous and harmonious; but this is the very thing that tires me. I see nothing so disgusting, as a discourse the first period whereof is the pattern of all the rest. Those men, whose minds are of so inflexible a make as to be able to assume one shape only, ought never to pretend to eloquence; for that requires a pliability of soul. One should be able to say that of the orator's understanding, which the philosophers observed of matter, that it was capable of receiving all manner of forms.

The preacher as well as the prophane orator should consult how to satisfy the ear of his hearers, by soothing it agreeably with a tuneful and harmonious stile. But why should he take all that care? For this important reason, viz. Because there is no possibility of persuading without pleasing, which is an admirable preparation for conviction. We do not immediately communicate our sentiments and thoughts to the hearts and understandings of our hearers, but have occasion for some sensible signs, such as words: These forthwith strike the ear, and from thence, as through a medium absolutely necessary, convey into their hearts and minds whatever we either think or perceive. But if these words make a disagreeable sensation on the hearer's ear, they never fail of imparting it to his very soul; and this uneasy perception which is offensive to the soul, is the cause that the man is so very hard to be persuaded. God at our creation has placed in the organ of the ear, or to

Speak more properly in the soul itself, a measure as it were of all words, by the artificial union and mixture whereof is formed what we call numbers and harmony in discourse. At this severe inflexible tribunal the soul judges in a sovereign manner, whether this harmony, and these numbers have that just proportion that they ought to have ; whether they are too prolix or too concise, whether blameable either in excess or defect, whether they perfectly fill the ear or not, whether there is nothing farther to be expected or desired by it. For it is much more difficult to please the ear than the mind ; that which is sufficient to satisfy one, is not always so for the other, an undeniable proof whereof we have in the Roman orator. He admired Demosthenes, and made no scruple of preferring him to all the world : Yet says he, Demosthenes does not always fill my ears, so greedy are they, and so continually longing after something immense and infinite.

Happy is the preacher who has received from heaven this vast great delicacy of taste and sense : For it is of all dispositions that which contributes most to the perfection of eloquence. Happy too is he, who can say with the same truth what Cicero relates of himself ; My ears are ravished with a full and compleat turn of words, they are sensible of every deficiency, and offended with every superfluity : But why should I say this particularly of my own ears, when I have so often heard the acclamations of whole audiences at the harmonious cadence of a period. We see some people insensible of these sorts of beauties, the harmony of a discourse is an obscure riddle to them ; but what shall we say of such persons ? I think we may affirm of them they have no ears, or rather that they are not men. The public I am sure will be extremely to be pitied, and their ears be miserably grated if ever these men get into the pulpit.

Many are of opinion that by the number, cadence and harmony of its stile a discourse is enervated, that its energy and vehemence is impaired : But they are either mistaken, or form a wrong idea of an harmonious stile, and conceive it to be such as true eloquence does not require. Let them, therefore, hear the great master in this art. So far, says he, is a discourse from being enervated by this regular disposal of the words, wherein its harmony consists, that without it, there would be no force or vigour in it. It is, I confess, a madness to make an harangue that shall have all the tunefulness imaginable, yet be utterly void both of sense and meaning ; but it would be childish too to make a discourse that shall abound in sense and good thoughts, yet be without order, proportion and harmony. We are naturally so much in love with a stile which has these qualities, that no one ever writ without a desire, that this harmony should be visible in his compositions, and no one ever was able to write with this disadvantage that did not.

But how comes it that a discourse receives strength from the numbers and harmony of it ? In the first place, pleasure is inseparable from harmony : Now pleasure as we have observed already is a wonderful allurement to persuasion. For which reason the art of pleasing has ever been an essential part in the art of persuading, and this last would be very weak, did not the other furnish it with the strongest arms which it has need of it in all its conflicts and successes. In the second place, these numbers and this harmony consists in a particular ranging and disposal of words, whereby the orator's thoughts and sentiments acquire that exact measure and suitable proportion, which are requisite in order to the making of a due impression : which disposition and order if you strip them off, their whole force languishes, and is lost together with that eloquent harmony, which kept up the spirit of them.

The nervous orations of Demostheneas himself would affect us much less powerfully, were they not composed with all that beauty of harmony and numbers, which is discernible throughout.

The numbers I know may be too sensible and plain, the cadence too exactly measured, and the harmony too uniform, whereby a disagreeable air of constraint and affectation is diffused throughout the whole discourse, which is soon followed with a dislike, and that immediately with contempt. By this too great affection of harmony, cadence and numbers, the thundering force of eloquence is destroyed, at least is changed into weak flashes, which have no other effect, but to make a vain glittering. These are as it were, so many fetters which the preacher should break and disengage himself from, if he pretends ever to arrive at the greatness and sublimity of eloquence.

Let the numbers therefore of your stile never appear studied, but so naturally ordered, that to the hearer they may seem as if they of themselves occurred to you, and only followed the thoughts and sentiments. For it is with numbers in discourses, as with rhyme in poetry. Reason is not to hunt after rhyme, but rhyme is to follow reason. Let the harmony of your stile be never constantly the same; for nothing is more apt to give distaste; and in this as in music an agreeable variety should prevail throughout the whole.

If in the heat of your more early youth, you have been overpowered by the temptation of a too numerous stile, a temptation very hard to be resisted by young preachers, imitate the discretion of Isocrates, who says of himself, that as he advanced farther in age, he became less a slave to the cadence of his stile; so that he was able not only to correct himself in this particular, but those too who were gone before him. There are some defects in eloquence as well as in good manners almost inseparable from youth, as we

must get rid of; if these in order to be thoroughly well-bred men, so must we too the others that we may become perfect orators.

There is besides this, a certain sweetness of stile which the christian orator should diffuse throughout all the parts of his discourse. Whether he has occasion to instruct or to improve, let him do both with sweetness, let this amiable quality appear in those very places of your discourse wherein you are obliged to be most warm and earnest, most impetuous and vehement: For in all the force, the violence, the impetuosity and as it were the thunder of eloquence, there is nothing incompatible with sweetness: On the contrary it is from hence that it derives principally its power.

But what sweetness is this, which in St. Austin's opinion, is so much to the advantage of eloquence? Does it consist precisely in pleasing the mind, or in forming a kind of concert in our ears, proceeding from an harmonious disposition of words, and an effeminate delicacy of expressions and thoughts? This kind of sweetness, which serves only to tickle the ears and soothe the mind, you ought to avoid as much as possible in your discourses. It is always pernicious and fatal to eloquence, as it is an obstacle to the persuading, affecting and converting of your hearers. What then is this persuasive, moving and successful sweetness? It is nothing else, to speak truly, but the texture of a discourse, of which all the thoughts and sentiments, all the turns, expressions and terms spring from a heart overflowing with zeal, charity and tenderness for the hearers, whose conversion and salvation is sincerely wished by him. When a preacher who is otherwise a man of good capacity and understanding, composes his sermons with a heart touched and penetrated in this manner, he never fails of communicating that sweetness to them, which insinuates itself into the very bottom of the soul, and

makes the heart likewise of his hearer in its turn extremely sensible, and most perfectly pleased with it. Hereby all sharpness, rusticity and bitterness of stile is excluded, which are imperfections that proceed sometimes from a savage and unpolished mind, but more generally from an insensible and hard heart.

There were two celebrated orators among the ancients distinguished by the great sweetness of their stile; but it was of a different character: In that sweetness peculiar to one of them there was something tender, soft and delicate, something that soothed the mind agreeably, and rather affected the senses than touched the soul. The orator rather delighted than inflamed his hearers, with whom nothing remained after all he had spoke more than the remembrance of his polite and agreeable eloquence. The sweetness of stile remarkable in the other was masculine, quick and pungent; and with all the pleasure that he gave his hearers, he left such a sting in their souls, as drove them with violence to that place to which he designed to lead them. Athens while it was yet a young and growing state was charmed with the first, and admired the second.

It is not difficult at all to judge which of these two kinds of sweetness is most suitable to the stile of a christian orator. If the soul has the least taste or sense of any thing, it must be sensible of this sort of it, which is so conducive to eloquence in the writings of St. Chrysostom.

“You ask me my brethren,” (here it is to be observed that he is endeavouring to incline his audience to a love of union and peace) “You ask me, who would be the wretch that should refuse to receive Jesus Christ among you? I answer you, you yourselves are those wretches, since our disputes and animosities drive him from us. But where, say you, are these animosities? We are here peaceably assembled in this church, we attend

"to you with profound silence, we unanimously
 "applaud our pastor, who discourses to us ; yet still
 "you tell us we are at war with one another. It is
 "indeed matter of much grief to me to discern, how
 "much we are divided, when there are so many
 "things that should unite us. While you are here,
 "every thing is quiet, but no sooner are you gone
 "from hence, than one is seen to accuse his brother,
 "another to do violence to him ; one is consumed
 "with envy, another possessed by avarice ; one is
 "transported by impure love, another busied in in-
 "venting a thousand artifices : Save yourself, and
 "save your brother : If anger hath pierced him with
 "its sting instead of making the wound wider, pluck
 "out immediately the deadly arrow from his heart.
 "It is much better to suffer an injury, than to com-
 "mit one, though that suffering were even to prove
 "fatal to us. Cain killed his brother, but he who
 "was thus murdered, is now crowned by the hand
 "of God, and the murderer punished, Abel was
 "unjustly slain, and after his death, his inno-
 "cence cried out against the injustice that was done
 "him ; while Cain was silenced and confounded at
 "the ill success of his crime : He murdered his bro-
 "ther, because he saw him more in favor than himself
 "with God : By making this bloody sacrifice of him,
 "he hoped he should put an end to this odious
 "friendship ; but on the contrary this murder im-
 "proved it, and was the cause of the Lord's asking
 "him with earnestness, Where is Abel thy brother ?
 "As if he had said : Think not you have extinguish-
 "ed my affection to him by your hatred ; this
 "wicked fratricide will make him more dear and
 "lovely in my eyes. My tenderness for him is
 "heightened by your violence, and though in his
 "life time he was by my appointment subject to you,
 "yet since his death, I have advanced him above
 "you. Judge then, my brethren, which is the

“ most miserable of the two, he who did the evil, or
 “ he who suffered it ; he who received so great an
 “ honor from God, or he who was condemned to
 “ such a punishment. You were not apprehensive
 “ of Abel in your life-time, says the Lord to this
 “ fratricide, but after his death he shall be dreaded by
 “ you : When you were ready to imbrue your
 “ hands in his blood, you were not restrained by the
 “ horror of the act, which, now you have committed
 “ this crime, shall be perpetually endured by you.
 “ You could not bear with a brother, whom, while
 “ he lived, you found so submissive, but the Lord
 “ who will avenge his death, will be ever hereafter a
 “ terrible God to you.”

What an impression must a discourse of this nature
 make, when set off with all the grace of pronouncia-
 tion, not upon the mind only, by feeding it with an
 empty satisfaction, nor upon the ear, by soothing it
 with an amusing harmony ; but upon the heart and
 very substance of the soul, by infusing into it an in-
 ward sense and relish of every thing the preacher says,
 and by busying and entertaining it therewith. This
 is a pleasure which neither distracts the soul, nor
 causes it to spend itself abroad in exclamations and
 wonder, nor to vent itself in magnificent encomiums
 of the speaker and his discourse ; but to recollect, and
 employ itself with the sentiments which the preacher
 has excited in it, which subdue it, and in some mea-
 sure take from it the liberty of thinking on any thing
 besides ; which stir and agitate it in a manner equally
 beneficial and agreeable, and that to such a degree,
 as to oblige it to take pleasure in being afrighted, de-
 jected, subdued, confounded, dismayed and conquer-
 ed. To what then may we impute the sweetness of
 St. Chrysostom's discourse, which triumphs over the
 soul and all its powers ? I can assign no other cause
 of it, than this, viz. That all the thoughts, expressions,
 figures, turns, and even syllables spring solely from a

heart touched, moved and melted, a heart warmed with charity, and burning with zeal; in short, from a heart affected as was that of this great master of christian eloquence. There is a secret, and at the same time a necessary sympathy between the hearts of the hearer and the preacher. One has no sense or taste of any thing, but what the other has both felt and tasted; and what has been thus sensibly relished by the one, is, by the constant law of nature, infallibly in the same manner relished by the other.

Your thoughts too should be diversified: If possible, there should be as many of them as of phrases in your discourse. For to insist too much upon the same thought is an argument of a barren genius. When you have set it forth clearly, and made it as intelligible as is necessary, proceed immediately to the discussion of another: For to lay the same thought so often before the hearer, is to amuse and surfeit him, and to shew a distrust of his understanding.

I know some preachers, who with great ease shall compose a sermon of two or three reflections, which they extend and enlarge as they see fitting, and make a hundred words of that, which may be expressed in three. They endeavour to supply the want of thoughts with a redundancy of words. Because it is much more easy to speak, than to think: And men are reduced indeed to a great poverty of eloquence, when they have nothing else to give us but words.

'Tis true, different turns may be given to the same thought, provided something new be added either to the strength or lustre of it. For without such an addition, they are mere froth, and of no use but to swell a discourse.

Not that I would have the christian orator deficient in words: On the contrary I should be glad he had good plenty of them, provided this were not the only

particular, wherein he were copious. Abundance of words is necessary to give new light and new weight to our ideas : Let us imagine that our thoughts enter into the hearer's mind, as iron into a solid body ; the blow must be redoubled, or it is to no purpose ; and he, who out of love to a laconic stile, says not all he ought, leaves but very slight traces in the mind of what he should imprint there deeply ; he speaks that by halves, which cannot be too often repeated, and is guilty of a real prevarication in the ministry of the word. When you are to mix flashes of lightning with the claps of thunder, to shake, overthrow and destroy, believe me, this is not to be done by a close and concise discourse, but by one more copious, more majestic and sublime. Again, when we are to persuade and convince, to steal into the minds of men, and to become masters of them, few words, or few moments are not sufficient to this end. The celebrated orator who so eminently excelled in the art of persuasion always left a sting in the hearts of his hearers, which is what every good preacher should do. But how should they leave a sting in the hearts of men who do not dive into them, and how should they dive into them but by the help of words ? Herein, I confess, a just measure is to be observed : but is a defect of it in your opinion more excusable than an excess ? Some every day are accused of being barren, flat and languid ; others with being diffuse, copious and lively to an extremity. One we say is transported beyond his subject, the other cannot come up to it ; both are equally blameable ; one has too much vigour, the other wants it : The sermons of the one are, if I may be allowed so to express myself, too plump, the others too lean. This fertility, however, is an evidence of a greater genius, though it be not a proof of so much exactness ; and if I were to make my choice, I should very readily declare for a redundancy of words,

which, in the expression of an ancient fall like snow in winter, I mean, for this rapid, copious and extensive eloquence, which to me seems heavenly and almost divine, as it has a sovereign dominion over the hearts of mankind.

But some will say that from this abundance of words proceeds the too great length of a discourse, which is a danger by all means to be avoided, and a fault very displeasing to the generality of hearers. Some of them, I know, are so indolent, and so nice, that if you were to consult them, you would speak not only very little, but not at all. But this vice of redundancy is indeed easily excusable in an orator, who is truly eloquent. Nay, I will venture to say farther, that a discourse from him of any length, will have all the advantage of shortness. The mind is charmed with the pleasure of hearing him, and while it is so, thinks very little of counting hours and moments.

If a preacher desires to succeed, he should either be short, or at least seem so. When once the audience begins to think him long, he certainly grows tedious, and tediousness is one of the greatest obstacles to persuasion. Whence I conclude, that it is allowable only in the most excellent orators to be long; because heaven has put it in their power only to be so, and yet to appear short.

But how after all, will you say, can we treat of any matter thoroughly, without drawing it into some length? Be as long as you please, you have my consent, provided you do not seem so: However I will tell you one infallible way, how to treat fully on your subject, and to be really short. Retrench all useless preambles, and every thing which does not tend directly to your design. For how much time is frequently lost in vain preliminaries, and pompous superfluities? The way never to be long, is to say

nothing but what is necessary. As soon as you have opened your mouth enter immediately upon your subject, and when you are once engaged in it, never leave it to amuse yourself with digressions. By this means you will say every thing that is to be said on the occasion, and that too with such a plenty of matter and words as is essential to true eloquence. Yet with all this you will be short. The reason whereof, as I once before observed is, that we are never long when we exceed not the limits of our subject, and are so always, when we wander out of them.

Your expressions too are to be varied, not only the things you say, should be different, but they should be said in a different manner. Sometimes they should be simple, at other times figurative. A well managed metaphor is of wonderful assistance to diversify expressions, the diversity of objects, which nature presents to us, supplying us with an almost infinite diversity of expressions.

Never have what may be called a favourite expression: For there would be affectation in it. Never let the same expression, especially when it is remarkable for the particular lustre and beauty of it, return twice in the same discourse. The hearer would suspect by it, that you endeavoured too earnestly to shine and sparkle, the bare suspicion whereof is to be avoided. The best resolution an orator can take, is, to wean himself for ever from such expressions; the gravity, greatness and majesty of his ministry require him to do so; and they would be extremely unbecoming one who is to speak as on the part of God. If sometimes he forgets himself so far as to make use of them; yet he should never do so without palliating them, never without difficulty, and as it were by constraint: They should seem to come from him through inadvertancy, and against his inclination; in short, so as the hearer may think that they

came rather in the preacher's way, than that he sought after them.

When there is nothing of this glitter in the discourses of a christian orator, it should appear that the want of it proceeds rather from his choice than his incapacity. St. Austin having produced one of the most florid passages in all St. Cyprian, makes this reflection. It was the design, says he, of this holy man to shew that he could express himself in this manner, because he has given us this one instance; and that he was not willing to do so, because he has given us no other. What then can we think or say of those preachers, who study all the ways imaginable to set off their discourses with something dazzling? We will both think and say of them, that their endeavours are all vain, that they fatigue themselves mightily to no purpose, that they vilify their character, and never hitherto understood what it is to preach.

Are men to be touched and converted by fine expressions? Shall I consider how to shine when I am to publish truths of so sublime and terrible a nature as those of christianity? Would not this be extreme weakness, not to say folly in me? Of what use, says St. Austin, is a golden key, if we can open nothing with it? And what matter is it, if it be of wood, provided it will serve the purpose? Let the expressions be ever so grave and unpolished, if they affect me, they are certainly to be preferred before the most delicate and lively ones, which would only please me.

The turns too and figures of your discourse should be varied. I am not of their opinion, who would allow no figures in sermons, under pretence, that they look too much like artifice, and become only a sophist and declaimer, who would have our discourses be plain and simple with an air of conversation, at most

of familiar instruction. They cannot think figures at all suitable to the character of Christ's ambassador: The truths of our religion say they, are great enough of themselves, and want not the help of art, and the ornaments of rhetoric to support them. I confess, an infinite difference should be made between a christian orator and a sophist and declaimer; and grant, that the ornaments wherewith these set themselves out would serve only to disfigure him. But the consequence to be drawn from this principle is not, that the christian orator should reject the turns and figures that are proper for his use, but those only that are peculiar to the sophist and declaimer.

Let all sophists and declaimers be excluded from the pulpit; for my own part I cannot endure to see them there; and can scarce refrain wishing ill to those hearers, who are such bad judges, or so excessively complaisant as to applaud them: But the christian orator is to be respected, and great care should be taken not to confound him with these corrupters of eloquence.

To admit no turns and figures in sermons, is to destroy the eloquence of them, which without this assistance must sink. If indeed we were barely to explain the truths of christianity, perhaps they might be omitted; but we are to give men a sense and relish of them; we are to touch the heart of a sinner, awaken his conscience, force him from the arms of pleasure, inspire him with a love of virtue and abhorrence of vice. And what a variety of turns and figures is necessary to this purpose? You should not confound the preacher with the catechist: He indeed had nothing to do with them; but the preacher hath great want of turns and figures, and we degrade the ministers of the gospel, when they are denied the use of them: If we believe there is any thing in them unworthy the character of Christ's ambassador, why did St. Paul, St. Chrysostom and the prophets use

them ? “ What hast thou here, and whom hast thou
 “ here, thou minister of the Lord ?* says the prophet
 “ Isaiah speaking to one of the chief priests of the
 “ Temple ; but I am mistaken that thou art no more
 “ than a vain shadow of him, thou hast hewed thee
 “ out a sepulchre here, as he that heweth out a sepul-
 “ chre on high, and that graveth an habitation for
 “ himself in a rock. But thou shalt never rest in
 “ this monument of thy vanity and luxury ; for the
 “ Lord will carry thee away with a mighty captivity,
 “ and will surely cover thee. He will surely vio-
 “ lently turn and toss thee like a ball in a large coun-
 “ try ; there shalt thou die, and there the chariots
 “ of thy glory shall be the shame of thy Lord’s
 “ house.” Is it possible for vanity, ambition, and
 the fall of a minister of God’s altar to be represented
 in more noble and lively figures ?

But what a great variety of figures is to be found
 in St. Chrysostom ? All his discourses abound with
 them, a beautiful example whereof we have in the
 fifth Homily on the epistle to the Romans ; where
 his design is to inspire his audience with a love of a
 God and a dread of the last judgment.

“ This judgment, my brethren will be most fright-
 “ ful, the tribunal terrible, and that enquiry that will
 “ be made there into the most minute things will
 “ strike us with the utmost consternation. The bare
 “ reflection on that flaming river which will swallow
 “ up the wicked in its deep abyfis is dreadful to us,
 “ what then will be our horror, if we fall into it ?
 “ Who of all mankind will be able to save us ? We
 “ cannot help trembling as often as we see in several
 “ passages of the gospel how the foolish virgins are
 “ for ever banished from the bridegroom’s chamber,
 “ and the wicked plunged into furnaces that flame
 “ eternally ; but it is impossible to represent the ter-
 “ rors wherewith our conscience will then be seized,

* Is. xxii. 16, &c.

“ when this sad sentence shall be executed. If any
 “ man now perceive himself to be guilty of any he-
 “ nious crime, would he not chuse to die a thousand
 “ times, rather than to see it revealed in this assem-
 “ bly, and to have so many witnesses of his impiety,
 “ as there are persons here? What then will become
 “ of us, when our lives shall be laid open to the view
 “ of all mankind? Alas! I speak of men who would be
 “ made acquainted with our lives, and witnesses of
 “ our confusion; but it is God, my brethren, his
 “ light, his penetrating eyes, his presence that we
 “ ought most to apprehend. What then will become
 “ of a sinner, when he shall be violently forced out
 “ of the darkness, which he has always coveted, in
 “ order to be produced before God? How will he
 “ endure the face of this judge? Where will he hide
 “ himself from the lightning of his eyes? Hell with
 “ all its flames will be a pleasure to him compared
 “ with the sight of an incensed Deity. But as God
 “ knows very well our weakness, and the little effect
 “ which this consideration would have upon us, he
 “ says nothing to us of it, and is content to threaten
 “ us with eternal fire. However I will venture to
 “ say, that the time wherein God will punish us, is
 “ not so much to be dreaded by us, as that wherein
 “ we offend him. We should be then afflicted when
 “ we sin against God, and not when God avenges
 “ himself. St. Paul was full of grief for the sins
 “ which were forgiven him, the consequences where-
 “ of were no longer to be feared by him; and Da-
 “ vid, though his person was out of danger, yet
 “ remembering how he had offended God, continues
 “ to cry out, Let thy hand I pray thee be against me
 “ and against my father’s house. For there is no
 “ punishment the pains whereof can equal that of
 “ having provoked God. But we are of so obdurate
 “ and insensible a disposition, that if the flames of
 “ hell were not proposed to us for our terror, it would

" be impossible to restrain the violence of our pas-
 " sions. And I dare say that though we had done
 " nothing else to deserve hell, this alone would ren-
 " der us worthy of it, since it is an argument that
 " we fear hell, more than Jesus Christ himself. St.
 " Paul had very different sentiments, and did we
 " love God as sincerely as he did, sin would be to us,
 " as it was to him, more insupportable than hell.
 " But we have nothing of divine love; and this is
 " matter of continual grief to me; this it is, that
 " draws tears from me. Yet what is it that God has
 " not done to engage our love? What tender and
 " charitable methods has he not found out? What
 " has he omitted that could attract it; We have
 " dishonoured him, while he was heaping blessings
 " on us, we have fled from him when he called us,
 " we have as it were forced ourselves from him,
 " while he was endeavouring to hold us, we have
 " abandoned him to serve the devil. He sent his
 " prophets to recal us, he has employed his patri-
 " archs and angels, yet we have been deaf and in-
 " sensible to all. Still he was not discouraged, but
 " was willing to conquer our malice with his good-
 " ness; he hath done what the most tender lovers
 " do, when they are despised; he hath addressed
 " himself to heaven and earth with his complaints,
 " he has taken the world to witness of our ingrati-
 " tude: He complains sometimes to one prophet,
 " sometimes to another, not to accuse us of our ob-
 " stinacy but to justify himself. He offers to give a
 " reason of his conduct, and we shut our ears against
 " him. O my people what have I done, says he,
 " unto thee, and wherein have I wearied thee, testify
 " against me. Yet still we continue to despise him;
 " we reject and stone those who speak to us on his
 " behalf. What then has his invincible patience
 " submitted to? What has his unbounded love de-
 " signed? He hath no more sent his angels and

" prophets to us, but his own son : He came and
 " we crucified him ; yet has not the murder of our
 " Saviour cooled his love to us, but rather inflamed
 " it more. St. Paul, with all the ardor of his zeal
 " cries out, We pray you in Christ's stead, be ye
 " reconciled with God. No one however thinks of
 " making speedily this reconciliation. After this,
 " what will the Lord do ? Will he abandon us ? As
 " yet he has not, but continues still to endeavour our
 " salvation : He terrifies and encourages us ; he
 " uses menaces and promises, he shews us heaven
 " and hell, the delights of one and the torments of the
 " other, and we remain insensible. Who would
 " believe this obstinacy that did not see it ? If man
 " had loved us to this degree, what should we not
 " have done for him ? And because God so far
 " humbles his greatness as to condescend to us, we
 " forsake him. O miserable ingratitude ! we trans-
 " gress every day : Our life is one continued chain
 " of sins. If we perform the least good conceivable,
 " we become like those mean servants, whose minds
 " are taken up with the little services they have done
 " their masters, and with the reward, which they
 " flatter themselves one day to receive from him. Oh
 " how much greater would be our recompence if we
 " expected none ! we should both do and suffer
 " every thing for Christ Jesus whom we love. Let
 " us love him, and our experience will convince
 " us, that this affection is its own greatest re-
 " ward. I don't know how I have been transport-
 " ed in this discourse, and while I am speaking
 " to persons, who for the sake of Christ were un-
 " willing to despise the glory of the world, I am
 " undertaking, in what manner I do not com-
 " prehend, to induce them farther out of affec-
 " tion to him to despise the glory of heaven
 " itself."

These are figures, it will be said, very different from those, which the generality of preachers make use of, and are inspired by a holy zeal and the divine spirit, not by art, study, or affectation. I confess there is the hand of God in these great patterns of sacred eloquence, but is not this too the very thing that I aim at? For what else is it that I desire, but that the turns and figures to be made use of by the christian orator, should be the work of zeal, and of the spirit of God, not of art, study, or affectation: These I intirely disapprove in him, I would have his figures to be simple and natural; and to be so they must proceed from a heart animated with sincere zeal, not from a mind prepossessed with a desire of pleasing, and continually intent upon every thing that may dazzle the multitude.

The figures made use of by the christian orator should owe all their beauty, force and lustre to the abundance of the heart, not to the fineness of the understanding. When the preacher has nothing in view, but the salvation of his hearers; when he is acted and speaks by the spirit of God, and the zeal of the Lord's house hath even eaten him up, he will turn himself all manner of ways, and assume all sorts of forms to make impression on his audience, and then a thousand figures will croud out of his mouth, like so many darts, that being fashioned and sharpened in his own heart, will find an easy passage into that of his hearers; they will be full of life and vivacity, they will carry fire every where with them, because they will retain something of their original; they will be multiplied and varied to an almost infinite degree, because they will follow the different motions of zeal and ardor, wherewith the preacher's mind is animated. Nothing ever was more flat and insipid, than the figures, that are conceived by the help of art and much reflection. The indifferent and undisturbed preacher adjusts and orders them in the

finest terms imaginable, and endeavours to set them off with an amazing and dazzling brightness : But he is soon spent with this fatiguing employment : His mind scarce holds out so far as to produce five or six figures of this character : It is to no purpose to put it to the rack ; half a dozen figures of this sort make up his whole stock ; these he displays in great pomp ; they appear over and over again in all his discourses, and you are sure of finding them repeated in every place.

These are figures unworthy a christian orator, and unbecoming his character ; avoid them as the bane of sound eloquence, their lustre is like that of a painted face, the artifice is too easy to be perceived not to destroy all that benefit you should propose in the exercise of your ministry. Were we, says St. Chrysostom, armed with the sword of the spirit, and the buckler of the word so far as to work miracles, we might in this case reject the use of turns and figures, and neglect all the helps which are borrowed from the art of fine speaking. A blind man restored to sight by a preacher, or a dead man raised up in the midst of his audience, would, I confess, very well supply the defect of his eloquence, and make a more than sufficient amends for the want of pathetic figures, and moving turns in his discourse : Though even then we should not, adds St. Chrysostom, totally neglect them ; since the blessed Paul as great a worker of miracles as he was, did not slight them ;* he, I say, whose words so charmed the Lycaonians, and whose wonders so amazed them ; that they were upon the point of sacrificing to him as to Mercury, whom they acknowledged to be the God of eloquence.

Your sentiments should be varied too. I have observed before, that if the heart is insensible, it is by no means proper for eloquence. I am confirmed

* De Sacred. l. 4.

more and more in my opinion, and add farther, that if it cannot put on all the sentiments, which are proportioned to the objects that offer themselves, it has none of the dispositions that are necessary in a christian orator. There are some preachers, who, let the subject they treat on be what it will, have always the same sentiments; which is much the same as having none at all. For my own part, I should as soon desire a heart insensible of every thing, as one of this temper; and that there are hearts as hard and insensible in matters relating to eloquence, as well as in respect to those of morality, is undeniable. The sense which a christian orator has of things should bear a suitable proportion to them: He should have a noble sense of great things, a lively sense of every thing that is sprightly and lively, and a tender and delicate sense of things delicate and tender; in short, the sensibility and delicacy of his heart should be such as nothing can escape. I don't know whether I explain myself sufficiently; I will therefore endeavour to do it more clearly. Before you begin to employ your mind on any subject, examine yourself in order to discover whether the several objects, which go along with it, make such impressions as they naturally should do upon a generous soul; whether your heart be elevated and enlarged by those objects, which should produce an impression of elevation and greatness; whether you are sensible that it is softened by such as should create this tender impression and so of others. If it be your good fortune to be so much master of yourself, as to put yourself, if you please, into this situation so favourable to good eloquence, set about the business of composing. In proportion as you unravel your matter, these impressions, which will succeed one another, will be likewise clearly laid open, from your heart they will be removed to your paper, upon this you will make a draught of them,

and give them, as I may say, body and colour, and your eloquent pen will be moved only as these impressions shall direct it.

What beautiful and amiable discourses will flow from a pen so conducted? There will be a thousand different sentiments by turns observable in them: Some violent, others smooth and soft; these noble and elevated, those tender and delicate. The hearer will have a pleasing sense of all of them: A secret satisfaction will diffuse itself through his heart, by means of which you will become absolute master of him, turn him as with an invisible chain in what manner you think fit, and lead him whither you desire. In short, you will perfectly subdue and triumph over him. And it is by the power only of these sentiments that we are able at any time to conquer the heart.

One infallible rule whereby to judge of the excellency and beauty of a sermon, is to judge of it by the impressions which it makes upon the heart; by the sentiments which it excites there and by the ideas that it raises in the mind. For if it charm the mind only, it is, in my opinion, very imperfect; but if it charm the heart, I may pronounce it without farther hesitation, a masterpiece.

It was said of one of the ancients, that he writ every thing with a pen dipped in good sense; for my part I should be very glad it could be said of the christian orator, that he writ every thing with a pen dipped in a sound heart, whereby I mean, such a one as has that due sense of every thing which it ought to have, and in that manner in which it should be sensible of it.

Holy scripture, in St. Chrysostom's opinion, is like a meadow covered with flowers of a thousand different kinds; the same thing may be said of his discourses; that agreeable variety which I am speaking of, is always one of their most beautiful ornaments,

as you will judge by the discourse I am going to lay before you,* wherein he proposes the love of God to us as the rule of our affection to our brethren.

“ My brethren let us love one another. For this
 “ affection to our neighbour reflects back again on
 “ God, who loves us so tenderly. In this point he
 “ acts differently from mankind, who are jealous,
 “ and unwilling that others should love persons that
 “ are dear to them : He shares with you in the love
 “ you have for others, he enters in some sort into so-
 “ ciety with you, and conceives even an aversion
 “ for you, if you do not join with him in an affection
 “ to those he loves. For the love of man, as we have
 “ said, is always jealous, but that of God never is so.
 “ Join with me in love, says he, to this person, and
 “ you shall be still more dear to me : Then I shall
 “ indeed believe you love me, when your affection
 “ is directed to the same object as mine : A more
 “ ardent passion cannot be expressed, which indeed
 “ is not at all surprizing, if we consider how earnest-
 “ ly he wishes our salvation. We may study what
 “ terms we please, to represent the happiness of this
 “ love, but they will be all deficient : Experience
 “ only can give us a due sense of it. Taste and see,
 “ says the prophet, how gracious the Lord is. Let
 “ us desire, my brethren, to be thus experimentally
 “ convinced of his lenity, let our delight be in the
 “ love of God ; by this means we shall anticipate
 “ the life of heaven, and live like angels here on
 “ earth in the fruition of all that they enjoy in hea-
 “ ven.”

The eyes are not more agreeably struck with the prospect of a field, wherein a thousand different objects are offered to our view, than is the hearer's mind by such a variety of thoughts, sentiments, turns, figures, expressions and places of scripture explained

* Homil. 23. on the Rom.

and applied properly, a variety that continually entertains and never fatiates. Yet the heart is still more satisfied than the mind; this succession of one sentiment to another never suffers it to languish, and makes those pleasing impressions on it, that move, transport and persuade it. How great is the difference between this variety inseparable from eloquence, and such a diversity in discourses, as consists in an arbitrary collection of many pieces, which the preacher endeavours sometimes to adjust together with as much propriety as he can.

Let your morality be varied. By morality I mean every thing relating to the persons whom we speak to, whether it be necessary to represent them barely, or to correct and perfect them. Have a care of falling into the mistake of those who imagine morality to be a part of the discourse separate from all the rest, whereas it should be interspersed through the whole sequel of it. For a sermon is a discourse altogether moral, that is to say, every thing in it should tend to the describing, reforming or perfecting the manners; and every thing that hath not this tendency, is foreign to the purpose, and deserves to be pared off. What apology then will those preachers make, who after they have been speaking a full hour, bethink themselves at last to tell us, they are coming to their moral reflections. What a sterility in this instance do they discover, who are always dwelling on the same point of morality, declaiming continually against the ambitious, voluptuous, or covetous? and when this is done are quite dry, having nothing to say farther.

Whence does this great deficiency of moral observations proceed, but from the want of knowing competently the manners of mankind? Many preachers never give themselves the trouble to study the heart of man, and are besides very little acquainted with the ways of living in the world. The retirement

and solitude, wherein the greatest part of them are obliged to spend their time, hinders them from gaining this knowledge.

We may find an inexhaustible store of morality by searching well into the bottom of man's heart ; of which likewise the knowledge of the world affords us as plentiful a supply ; But as the preacher cannot acquire this by conversation without acting unsuitably to his character, the want of it is very excusable in him. He may indeed acquire it by reflection, though not by commerce and conversation ; and this it is so much his duty to do, if preaching is his business, that all neglect of it is unpardonable in him. Without a knowledge of the world, what dangers must you inevitably run, who are to speak to men of the world ? How much impropriety must there be both in the matter and manner of your discourses to them by speaking what ought not to be mentioned, and concealing what they ought to be told, or by doing both in a way altogether unbecoming ? A man who designs to speak in public, should not only know how men live in the world, but how they speak in it too. You should be equally informed of the language as well as conduct, that is usual in it, I mean of the signification which the men of the world annex to the terms that are fashionable among them. And this knowledge of terms was never more necessary to preachers than in the present age, the corrupt and libertine part of mankind taking pleasure every day to fix every criminal significations on very innocent terms. I may go on in my discourse with all the simplicity that can be according to the integrity of our ancestors, and in the mean while make use of some of these terms, which have been so vitiated : The effect whereof is to make some in the audience laugh, others blush ; and utterly to destroy all the benefit of my discourses. If therefore, you would

succeed, take care how you neglect any, the most minute thing, which so neglected may spoil all.

But is the preacher, who is acquainted with the heart of man excusable? Whose fault is it, that he doth not know it better? To do so, he has need of nothing more than himself, and his own reflections. Why then does he not reflect and study himself? There is resemblance between the hearts of all mankind, and he who knows his own perfectly, knows that of all others. But this study is uneasy, and we chuse rather to go abroad, to search book after book, to run through large volumes, and gather some flowers from thence, and so raise a confused heap of what other men have thought or said. In the mean while we are strangers to the dictates of our heart and mind; and as we know nothing, so we give ourselves very little trouble to know any thing of them. It is true, the study of the heart is difficult, and to be intent on its motions, to lay open the secret springs of it, and discover all its foldings is a fatiguing employment, but a necessary one. And you have no other choice, but either to abandon your profession, or determine to undergo the pain of it.

The constant reading of the scriptures will give very great assistance to you in this labour. For upon an attentive perusal of them, you will find a natural description there of all the sentiments, that have been discovered by you in your own heart. He who first formed the heart of man, and is the searcher of it, has taken care to engrave them there with his own hand. The readiest way to arrive at a perfect knowledge of the heart of man, is to read the scriptures diligently, and while we read them, to reflect upon what passes at that time within us; and this knowledge being once attained, you will find in it an infinite store of morality to furnish all your sermons. Do justice therefore to yourself; for the reason why you are so

defective in morality, that you diversify it so little, and return almost always to the same things is, because you do not sufficiently enquire into the bottom of your subject, and are content to touch upon it lightly. As you consider no farther than the surface of things, you are obliged to have recourse other ways for a supply of matter, which the subject itself for want of thorough meditation on it, not furnishing, the mind of necessity soon grows faint, and is exhausted.

There are some particular truths belonging to every subject ; and every truth has something moral in it ; so that if you have the skill to discover the truths included in your subject, you will have a vast field of morality open before you. Whatever subject you treat of, treat of it thoroughly, and you will never repeat the same things ; but on the contrary the things you speak will be always new, as well as true.

I perceive, said Cicero, speaking of himself, that I say things which seem new, though they are indeed very old : The reason whereof is this ; the generality of the people have never heard them mentioned. Do you desire that the hearers should observe of you, that you tell them things which they never had heard spoken ? Tell them what is to be said on every subject ; for we seldom say what is to be said, but almost always what others have said upon it before us. Pursue this method constantly, and you will never be reduced to the necessity of reproducing the same persons on the stage, after the example of those preachers, who when they have described some particular vices and passions, imagine that they have hit upon the most beautiful and delicate part of morality, nay perhaps of christian eloquence.

Thanks be to heaven, descriptions begin now to be out of fashion ; and would to God they had been so

long since ; for never was there any fashion of so ill a taste. Preachers were mistaken in this point, and willing to deceive their hearers in it too. For to what purpose were all these descriptions ? What relation, what proportion had they to the end of christian eloquence ? Are they of any use to affect men ? To excite in them a love of virtue, and an abhorrence of vice ? Not at all. All that they are good for is, to please the mind, to tickle the ear, to enliven the imagination, to raise an admiration of the painter's skill, of the delicacy of his hand, and the beauty of his pencil. When we lose sight of the end, which the christian orator should have in view, we turn to the left, we wander, and go very fast out of the way. I am, suppose, to make a discourse upon ambition or avarice, what is it that I immediately think upon, that most employs me, and is my principal end ? Is it to consider the strongest and most moving arguments, that religion and christianity can supply me with ? To moderate these passions, and inspire men with the horror of them ? No ; but to make a beautiful description of ambition and avarice ; to this end I use the finest touches, the most lively colours, and the most studied terms ; I bring to light the most artificial and imperceptible motions of the heart, but in a manner as artificial and imperceptible, as they are themselves. After a great deal of pains taken in my performance, I applaud myself for it, and flatter myself with having made a fine description of ambition and avarice, and to have set a finishing hand to it ; with which imagination I am delighted. But while I do thus, am I, think you, in the right way ? Do I discharge well the duties of a christian orator ? Or rather am I not strangely mistaken, and do I not prostitute my ministry ? I do not doubt but some preachers, who are fond admirers of these descriptions, though growing out of fashion, will cry out and say, is it then incompatible with the eloquence of the

pulpit to paint the manners of mankind ? Is not a sermon a moral discourse ? And should not the manners of men be represented in it ? Are not our hearers to be made to understand themselves ? and should not descriptions of their vices, disorders and passions be laid before them ? wherein they may see themselves as in so many clear mirrors, so distinctly as to be able to say, this is as I am exactly, this is the very picture of myself, &c.

CHAP. VIII.

Of the Description of the Manners of Mankind peculiar to Christian Eloquence.

I BY no means condemn all description of man's manners in a sermon. I know very well that it is so far from being incompatible with the eloquence of the pulpit, that on the contrary it is essential to it. For every sermon should be composed with a design of reforming the manners of mankind, of moderating their passions, of making vice hateful, and virtue lovely. The preacher's business is to shew the opposition there is between the lives of the generality of christians and the holy maxims of the gospel : It is his duty to tell them what they are, that they may the better perceive what they ought to be. Now this is not possible to be done without descriptions and portraitures ; but there is still a difference. I find fault only with those descriptions, wherein what passes in the world and in the heart of man is represented in so artificial, so delicate, and elaborate a manner, that the generality of those who hear them, are

not able to know themselves in them; which they only are capable of doing, who have as much or perhaps more wit than the preacher. As for the common people they are so much above their apprehensions, that they believe, and with reason, that the persons thus described are men of a nature different from theirs, and of another world.

I blame likewise those descriptions, wherein the passions of mankind are represented in such particulars, as serve very often to no other end, but to sooth their self-love, and make vice amiable, instead of creating an abhorrence of it. The copy is so beautiful that men are tempted to fall in love with the original. The preacher convinces us, that so much wit, capacity and address, so much elevation and greatness of soul is necessary to be ambitious, for example, that they who are not so, desire earnestly to be, or at least are sensible of some kind of regret to find that they are not so. A friend of mine said to me one day, I have been hearing a preacher of your acquaintance, who made such a beautiful description of prophane love, that he has almost inspired me with it.

I condemn also those tedious descriptions, which make up the greatest and most considerable part of the discourse, in which they have a place, as the pictures of the most excellent masters in the cabinets of curious persons, for pleasure only, for ornament, luxury and ostentation. In short, all descriptions are blameable, wherein it appears visibly, that the preacher's aim is to distinguish himself, that they are in his own judgment the master-pieces of his art, and that the composition of them is one chief part of his ministry. Antiquity never approved of such descriptions; the ancient orators both sacred and prophane were unacquainted with them; they never were acknowledged to be a part of sublime eloquence, and are indeed corruptions of this art, or at most but of the lowest form of eloquence. The descriptions

therefore which we approve of in a christian discourse should be of this character, they should be simple, without any affectation of fine terms, or elaborate expressions, without any of the oppositions, antitheses's and gingle of words, which may do well enough in a man, who has a mind to trifle, but are very silly and insipid in a christian orator, whom nothing becomes so well as gravity and seriousness. Descriptions should be always natural and like, we should represent what really is, not what may be, and describe men such as they are, not such as we imagine them to be. They should be sensible and popular, easy to be apprehended and suited to every man's capacity : So that we may not only know ourselves in them, but that it should be impossible for us to be mistaken : They should be so plain as to be discernible to the eyes of the multitude, for it is the multitude we preach to. That your descriptions may have this air of popularity, you should draw them, according to the actions of the persons, whom you undertake to describe ; not according to some particular sentiments, which they may have accidentally discovered, and which are not to be rightly understood without a too refined and delicate reflection on ourselves. Thus Theophrastus has drawn all his characters from the actions of mankind, and St. Chrysostom has imitated him : For the actions fall under the senses, and we never are mistaken in them. Jesus Christ, the first and greatest master in the art of speaking well, and consequently in the art of describing the passions of mankind, forms his description of them from the actions. In the picture which he gives us of hypocrisy ; * " Woe unto you, Pharisees, " hypocrites, says he, who shut up the kingdom of " heaven against men. For ye neither go in your- " selves, neither suffer ye them, that are entering to " go in. Who devour widows' houses, and for a

* Matt. xxiii. 13, &c.

“pretence make long prayers : Who compass sea
 “and land to make one profelyte ; and when he is
 “made, you make him twofold more the child of
 “hell than yourselves. Who pay tythe of mint,
 “anise and cummin, and omit the weightier matters
 “of the law. Who strain at a gnat, and swallow a
 “camel ; who make clean the outside of the cup and
 “of the platter, but within are full of extortion and
 “excess : Like whited sepulchres, which indeed
 “appear beautiful without, but within are full of
 “dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness.”

It is likewise by the actions, that he describes the
 rich and their want of compassion to the poor.
 * “There was a rich man, who was cloathed in pur-
 “ple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every
 “day. And there was a certain beggar named La-
 “zarus, which was laid at his gate full of sores, and
 “desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fall from
 “the rich man’s table : Moreover the dogs came
 “and licked his sores.” What an air of simplicity
 and greatness may be observed in these descriptions !

Let your descriptions be interspersed throughout
 your whole discourse, and not made a separate part
 of it. As you inform your hearers what they should
 be, tell them likewise what they are, that by this op-
 position they may be made to enter into themselves,
 that they may be humbled and confounded. You
 act a very unbecoming part, when you value yourself
 upon the talent of a good describer. Let your des-
 criptions be drawn without any appearance of design,
 and in such a proportion as is necessary to instruct,
 affect or persuade your hearers. Make use of them
 as a means only which eloquence affords you for the
 attainment of your end, and not for the misleading
 of you from it. For this they certainly do, if you
 employ them only as vain amusements and empty
 ornaments of your discourses.

But above all let your descriptions be christian. Be mindful always of the character which you are to maintain. Let them be such as become the majesty of the pulpit without any of that trifling, which is proper only for a comedy and the stage : Particularly let them always carry with them an abhorrence of vice, and a love of virtue. Represent constantly the disorders of human passions in such a manner, as may make them odious and terrible, so that the very way of describing them may create these impressions, and cast a veil over every thing, that may make them appear in any degree amiable. In short, let your descriptions be so framed, that the hearer may judge, as soon as he understands them, that they are not so much the work of a learned and ingenious hand, as of a heart prompted by the love of virtue and hatred of vice. These are the descriptions proper for sermons, agreeable to the rules of eloquence, and very natural ornaments of it.

I think myself obliged to propose some few examples of these descriptions, as I have represented them, and as they suit with the laws of true eloquence. The prophets and St. Chrysostom will supply us with them.

“ * Because the daughters of Sion are haughty, says
 “ Isaiah, and walk with stretched forth necks, and
 “ wanton eyes, walking and mincing as they go, and
 “ making a tinkling with their feet. Therefore the
 “ Lord will smite with a scab the crown of their
 “ heads ; and in that day he will take away the bra-
 “ very of their tinkling ornaments about their feet, and
 “ their cauls, and their round tires like the moon,
 “ the chains, and the bracelets, and the mufflers, the
 “ bonnets, and the ornaments of the legs, and the
 “ headbands, and the tablets, and the ear-rings, the
 “ rings, and the nose-jewels, the changeable suits of

* Isa. iii. 16, &c.

“apparel, and the mantles and wimples, and the
 “crisping-pins, the glasses and the fine linnen, and
 “the hoods, and the veils.”

A christian orator may easily fail in the details of this nature. He must be cautious therefore, and observe exactly, what our language will bear and be particularly careful to improve them after the example of the prophet, who having condescended to speak of such minute things, on a sudden raises his stile, saying, “Instead of a sweet smell there shall be a
 “stink, and instead of a girdle a rent, and instead of
 “well set hair, baldness; and instead of a stomacher
 “a girding of sack-cloth, and burning instead of
 “beauty. The vengeance of the Lord shall extend
 “even to the men whom you take so much pains to
 “please with all these vain ornaments, the bravest
 “and the comliest of them shall fall by the sword,
 “and in the war. In short, so extreme will be the
 “common affliction, that the very gates of Sion
 “shall lament and mourn, and Sion herself shall resemble a disconsolate woman sitting upon the
 “ground and taken up wholly with her grief.” This description of the luxury and vanity of woman, as well as of the punishment of God upon them, is very noble, and at the same time very affecting.

“* “Think not, my brethren, says St Chrysostom,
 “describing vain glory, think not either on heaven
 “from whence it for ever excludes us, or on hell,
 “into which it plunges us; but consider only what
 “even in this life attends it: Does any thing engage us in more expence and trouble, or expose us
 “to more affronts? How lavishly do we consume
 “our fortunes in plays, entertainments, buildings,
 “and other the like follies? It is afflicting to see
 “every day how some men rob others of their
 “wealth to keep up their expences in huntsmen,

* Homil. xvii. On the Epist. to the Rom.

“ dogs and horses : The madness of vain glory
 “ reaches even beyond the grave. We may observe
 “ men, when they are almost expiring, taken up
 “ with raising monuments for themselves, or appoint-
 “ ing a magnificent funeral. Some of them who in
 “ their life-time have spurned with disdain at a poor
 “ man, that begged an alms of them, in these last
 “ moments think only how to be profuse in ridicu-
 “ lous and vain expences : And is not this a suffi-
 “ cient proof of the tyranny of this passion ? It is
 “ horrible to consider how it makes a part even of
 “ immodest love, in the enjoyments whereof men do
 “ not sometimes so much desire a brutal pleasure,
 “ as the miserable reputation of having corrupted a
 “ virtuous person, and that at last they have over-
 “ come the purest and most obstinate innocence :
 “ For it is incredible what a multitude of evils are
 “ produced by this passion. I had rather be a slave
 “ to all the barbarians in the world than to vain-
 “ glory ; they cannot impose any thing so grievous
 “ on their vassals, as what this passion commands
 “ those, who are subject to its power. I expect, it
 “ tells them, that you should be submissive and
 “ obedient to all men, not to those only who are
 “ above you, but to others likewise who are your
 “ inferiors. Neglect the salvation of your soul, des-
 “ pise virtue, laugh at heaven and hell, and take no
 “ care of any thing whereby you may be saved. If
 “ you do good let it be always with a view, not of
 “ pleasing God, but of acquiring glory : Never
 “ disturb yourself about the reward, which is promised
 “ to those, who do good in secret. When you be-
 “ stow your charity, or fast, endure all the pain
 “ that accompanies your good words, but have no
 “ regard to the solid advantage that may be reaped
 “ from them. Can any thing be more tyrannical
 “ than these impositions ? Vain-glory may be like-

“ wise esteemed the mother of avarice and envy.
 “ Was all this croud of servants and officers magni-
 “ ficiently dressed, of parasites and flatterers, all
 “ these gilded chariots, and so many other follies still
 “ more vain, were they all the invention of necessity ?
 “ Do they not owe their original to vain-glory ra-
 “ ther than pleasure ?

The beauty of this description leads me to another
 of St. Chrysostom's making, viz. that of envy. For
 every thing that comes from him, may be said to
 come from a masterly hand.

“ It is more easy, says he, to find persons who
 “ weep with those that weep, though there be no-
 “ thing in it but what is very melancholy, than to
 “ see any who rejoice with those that rejoice. They
 “ are willing enough to mingle their tears with the
 “ tears of other men, but they are not in the least
 “ inclinable to make an equal part in their joy ; nay,
 “ sometimes they are more disposed to weep when
 “ others are most over-joyed ; which is the pure
 “ effect of envy. Is any thing, my brethren, more
 “ to be pitied than this detestable passion ? For it
 “ strives not against man, so much as against God,
 “ and destroys all the good which he hath implanted
 “ in man. Consider then you who are possessed
 “ with this unhappy passion, to what a condition it
 “ reduces you ; and let your own interest at least
 “ prevail with you, if that of your brother has no
 “ influence upon you. Why do you suffer yourself
 “ to fall into those agitations, which are so pernicious
 “ to you ? To what end do you perplex and dis-
 “ quiet yourself ? Is it because your brother is ad-
 “ vanced to honor ? This should fill you with joy
 “ and pleasure : You should give glory to God for
 “ thus promoting one of your own members. If you
 “ say, that the glory that is given to God by all men
 “ on your brother's account, is the reason of your
 “ vexation, I have nothing to answer ; only consider

“ the tendency of this enmity which you declare
 “ against him and tremble. The glory of God, you
 “ say, does not afflict you, but the glory of this per-
 “ son ; yet perhaps it is through him that God is
 “ glorified. Your aversion therefore reflects back
 “ upon God : But you had rather God were glorified
 “ through you ; and so he may be if you take plea-
 “ sure only in the honor of your brother : By this
 “ means you will be author of those blessings which
 “ God will certainly receive, when it shall be ob-
 “ served, that he has servants free from envy, who
 “ delight as much in the happiness of their brethren
 “ as in their own. No enmity is so cruel as that of
 “ envy ; other aversions cease with the subject of
 “ them, but the envious man never becomes a friend
 “ to him, against whom he has conceived envy. In
 “ other conflicts men engage openly, in this private-
 “ ly : in others they do not want at least fair pre-
 “ tences, but in this there is nothing to be discerned but
 “ folly. We may say therefore that this is the great-
 “ est of all evils : It dissolves religious assemblies,
 “ and begets heresies ; it has formerly armed one
 “ brother against another, and imbrued the murderer’s
 “ hand in innocent blood. It has made nature rebel
 “ against itself ; introduced death, and suppressed all
 “ thought in a parricide of father, mother, brother
 “ and himself. Cain was so furiously possessed with
 “ envy, that when God himself endeavoured to ap-
 “ pease him, saying, Unto thee shall be his desire, and
 “ thou shalt rule over him ; yet was he inflexible.
 “ his disease was so incurable, that remedies of any
 “ kind did but irritate it the more. But what is the
 “ cause of this envy ? Is it the honor which your
 “ brother paid to God by sacrificing to him ? If so,
 “ what greater wickedness could the Devil himself
 “ commit ? Or is it the reputation he has of being
 “ more holy and more innocent than you ? If you

“ would in this particular excel him, let him live,
 “ that your virtue may have matter for continual
 “ exercise, and that you may have more honor in
 “ surpassing a living than a dead man. Do you not
 “ see, that by killing him, the whole world acknow-
 “ ledges him to be the conqueror and you the con-
 “ quered? But envy considers nothing. What
 “ glory could a parricide expect in solitude, where
 “ there was no inhabitant? Yet nothing checks him.
 “ He follows blindly the incitement of the Devil,
 “ and murders his own brother. The Devil was
 “ not content with man’s becoming subject to death
 “ by sinning; this cruel spirit, who is never to be
 “ satiated with our miseries, was impatient to see the
 “ speedy execution of a punishment, which was pro-
 “ cured by his own artifice. Though he was assured
 “ that man would very soon return to the earth,
 “ whence he was taken, yet this was not enough :
 “ A natural death seemed to flow to him; he was
 “ desirous to see the son die before his father, and
 “ one brother slaughtered by another. See then
 “ the effects of envy from the beginning of the world;
 “ and the opportunities the Devil has received from it
 “ of satisfying himself with our misfortunes.”

Here then, before we go farther, let us reflect for
 some moments on the descriptions which I have laid
 before you. Do they not appear all to be of that
 character which is most agreeable to sound eloquence?
 Is there not all the simplicity that can be wished in
 them? Can it be so much as suspected that the ora-
 tor has any inclination to sparkle, or shew his wit?
 Here are no studied or affected terms, but a perfect
 copy of nature : Every vain and envious man may
 easily know himself in them, they are perfectly sensi-
 ble and popular. St. Chrysostom is inimitable in this
 point. He never describes vices separately from their
 subject : My meaning is, he describes not envy and
 vain-glory, but the envious and vain-glorious man.

Hence it is that his descriptions are taken almost always from the actions of men ; which is the reason that they are so much of a level with the understanding of all the world : Then they are so artificially intermixed in the body of his discourse, that even when he is making them, he seems to be doing something else. They are wrought by him after such a manner, that they tend always to the leaving some wholesome impressions on the heart ; because his hand is always guided, and his mind animated with zeal for the salvation of souls. Let us not forget one of the most fertile causes of that variety, which we have declared so essential to eloquence, and on which we have so long argued. This is the knowledge of applying properly, and managing rightly the historical facts of religion : Whereby I mean whatever the scripture, fathers, and councils have said on every christian subject. If you draw from these great stores, you will never want abundant matter wherewithal to vary your discourses.

It is therefore of the utmost consequence to the preacher, that he make a well chosen collection out of the sacred and learned writers. If he will confine himself precisely to the sentiments and reflections, which the subject may itself suggest to him, his discourse may be exact, true, simple and natural, but it will be neither full enough, nor so diversified and so christian as it ought to be. Let us meditate upon our subject with ever so much penetration and attention, yet our meditation must be assisted by reading. This gives us a thousand different views of it, either by representing to us the thoughts of the author we are reading, or by awakening in ourselves those ideas whereof perhaps we should otherwise have taken no notice at all. The christian religion which we preach, is not a system founded on pure speculation and reasoning, but on authority and revelation. The most happy fancy is not sufficient for a christian orator :

we may admire the exactness, the copiousness and penetration of his genius, but still we are to seek for the spirit of christianity, and foundation of our religion both in him and his discourses.

CHAP. IX.

That the Discourses of the generality of Preachers are too plain and by that means tedious.

THE discourses of the generality of preachers are too plain, and by that means become tedious; which is occasioned by their borrowing all they say from their own stock: They would have every thing the work of their own meditation, in short, they would create. There is not perhaps a more dangerous mistake in eloquence than this. Every orator, and the christian still more than the prophane orator, is an invention, and not a creator. Invention is one of the essential parts of eloquence, creation is not. The orator's duty, is to search, to find and speak whatever is contained in his subject: But the subject is neglected and he obstinately resolves to force every thing he has to say out of his own mind. Can he be ignorant what a christian discourse is? To define it rightly, it is a discourse, wherein the principles of religion with their consequences, are laid before the people, according to the rules of eloquence; the whole whereof is founded on the scripture, fathers and councils. Now nothing of all this proceeds from the preacher, or is of his own native growth. The order therefore, dispositions, turns, figures and

title of a discourse are all that should come immediately from the preacher. As for matter and thoughts they should be supplied by religion, nothing belonging properly to him, besides the construction of them. The christian orator is not to entermix the least reflection of his own ; for by doing so, he would mingle a prophane fire with one that is sacred, and so speak not from God but from himself, preach his own not God's word. If the preacher is not able to say with the prophets at the end of every period he pronounces, The Lord hath spoken, he cannot be said to preach. The word of the Lord never returns empty : An interior grace, which both enlightens and effects us, always accompanies it : If you preach it the hearer will be moved and instructed ; but what will be, if you do not preach it ? What mischief shall we not do ? What an account shall we be obliged to give for substituting the word of any other person in the room of God's word ?

Never use citations in your discourses, purely for the sake of citing them. For this is all but loss of time, amusement, and vain ostentation of your learning and reading. Every passage, that does not contribute either to the proof, confirmation or ornament of some truth in christianity should be laid aside : Those which are purely ornamental, should be seldom used ; and then expressed in few words. The Christian orator should never be profuse in embellishments, no, not in those which are borrowed from scripture and the fathers.

I know some preachers, who would be very sorry to cite a passage, which had not something bright in it : They think nothing beautiful in the fathers, but what is sparkling, they neglect the substantial arguments, the solid reflections and fine turns of eloquence, which may be found in them, to follow some glimmerings, some little rays of light, with which their weak eyes are dazzled. This is a proof of their

low understanding, and bad judgment. We should speak the language of the scripture and the fathers, not only when we cite them but when we do not.

As every art so the pulpit too has its particular language; a language composed altogether of terms, expressions, turns, figures and images borrowed from scripture and the fathers: This properly speaking is the language of the pulpit.

It is not expected from you, that you should be continually saying, this term is taken from scripture, this is such a father's expression, and the like; this would only interrupt the sequel of your discourse, draw it out into length, and make it tedious. The learned will discover without you telling it, from what sacred source your language is derived, and the common people will be sensible of it: For there is, I know not what grace, and secret unction, inseparable from this divine language, which makes such impressions on the heart, as no other language can.

Is it possible to speak upon a christian subject, and pass over in silence, what Jesus Christ has said of it? Would it not be criminal to do so? Is it not kind of sacrilegious theft to conceal that from the knowledge of the multitude, which before all other things they should be informed of? Shall Jesus Christ take care to represent any christian truth to me under particular images and ideas, and shall not the preacher condescend to do the same? Whatever men may say of this, I shall always think it a prevarication unworthy the evangelical ministry. Does he believe he can represent it to me better in any other way? Can he be guilty of so much presumption? Who knows the heart of man better than Jesus Christ? And who better understands what means are necessary to engage it.

The gospel well studied and well meditated upon, is the book the most to be cherished by the preacher. Not a word, not a syllable, not any thing that came from the lips of Jesus Christ, the sovereign master of morality, should escape him. How fond am I of those discourses, wherein the truths of religion are continually offered to my mind with the same images and colours which our Saviour has made use of to instruct us ! The discourses wherein the parables of the gospel are introduced to make a part of them, in this particular would infallibly charm all the world.

It were to be wished that the discourses which we commonly call Homilies, were recommended to our preachers, provided an exact idea were formed of such a Homily, as is fitting for the pulpit, and that they would be regulated by it. That kind of Homily which is fitting for the pulpit, is not a bare exposition of the gospel, made without order, or without any fixed and determinate view, to which all that is said may be referred, and wherein there is nothing elevated, moving or pathetic ; this should be termed rather interpreting than preaching the gospel. That kind of Homily, which suits particularly with the christian orator, is a discourse made according to all the rules of sound eloquence. For in the first place, there should be unity in the Homily : That is to say, one certain point, whither all its parts should tend as to their centre. This point should be some great moral truth, whereof we endeavour to persuade men : Thus that multiplicity of different objects is removed, between which there is often no relation or alliance ; a multiplicity that distracts the attention of the hearer, and carries him with so much swiftness from one object to another, that it prevents any of them from acting or making impression on him. In the second place there should be method, order, and contrivance

in the homily ; this is done by reducing the whole text of your gospel to certain propositions subordinate to one another, and tending all directly to demonstrate the same truth. By this means all those uncertainties are removed, which keep the hearer's mind always fluctuating, and are the reason that he never knows what is, or what ought to be the preacher's aim. In the third place, a Homily should have all the force and greatness, all the sublimity and pathetic power of a christian discourse. Thus it will preserve the majestic air of the pulpit, and you will hinder it from degenerating into a simple, tedious and heavy exposition. Let no one imagine therefore that he must preach with a less degree of eloquence, if he would preach after the manner of Homilies. I undertake to compose a homily, as a christian orator should do, upon the parable of the ten virgins ; for example, I enquire first, what end Jesus Christ proposed to himself in this parable, and I find it is to incline us to watch and be in a constant readiness. I should therefore persuade my audience to christian vigilance, and that continual attention wherein we ought to live, that we may not be surprized at the hour of death. This is my design, that only point wherein the unity of my discourse will consist. After this I proceed farther to examine all the parts which compose the parable. Here I take notice of five foolish and as many wise virgins : The wise took care to keep their lamps always well provided with oil, the foolish never concerned themselves about it ; both one and the other of them fell asleep. At midnight the bridegroom comes, and they awake. The wise virgins with their lamps prepared, run out to meet him, and were admitted to the marriage feast. The foolish virgins are very earnestly employed in trimming their lamps, and procuring oil, but find

none willing to supply them with it. They go to the merchants to beg, some, but at their return they find the door shut, and are answered by the bridegroom, I know you not. These are all the parts of the parable. I reflect and consider with myself, whether I could not naturally reduce them to certain propositions, which tend to prove the vigilance and attention wherein we ought to live in order to prevent being surprized : And having well thought on it, I reduce them to these two. First, I affirm that to delay our preparation to that time, wherein we should be actually prepared, is the greatest of all follies. Secondly, That to flatter ourselves with the hope of having time then to prepare ourselves, when we should be already prepared, is the grossest of all mistakes. And with these two propositions explained, unravelled and proved by reasons, thoughts, terms, expressions, images, turns, figures and motions all taken from the parable itself, I happily accomplish my design, and make my hearers sensible of this consequence, which is of so much importance to our salvation : 'Watch and be always ready.

The farther I enter into the spirit of these divine parables, the more I discover in them of that rich store, which yields such a wonderful supply of eloquence : The terms, expressions and images, consecrated by the application which Jesus Christ has made of them, give a popular and simple air to the whole discourse, and there is joined with it that greatness and sublimity, which ravishes the heart.



CHAP. X.

Of the Popularity of Eloquence.

HOW little is the generality of preachers acquainted with that part of eloquence, which gives an air of popularity to our discourses. I observe this, not of those only of the lower form, but of the most distinguished, and those who have most reputation in the world. They have all the other qualities peculiar to an orator, and want only this: The matter of their sermons is always reasonable and christian, the manner of them pure, elegant, noble and elevated. Wherein are they then defective? in nothing but this popularity.

There is frequently no commerce or communication between the preacher and the hearer; the preacher is exalted to the upper regions, while the hearer is seated far below. Every thing he says, is indeed beautiful and agreeable with the christian institution, but not of a level with the capacity of the common people. The multitude is attentive to the discourses of these preachers, is struck with the sound of their voice, with the gracefulness of their gesture and the warmth of their pronounciation: Nay, farther, sometimes admires and applauds: But what? This they cannot tell. It was said of a celebrated preacher, that his eloquence was like a river that flowed continually above his hearers heads: no little streams of it ever descended so low as the mind and heart of the multitude. His whole audience admired him, but few comprehended him. It is not expected from the people, that they should raise themselves to an equal height with the preacher, but that the

preacher should condescend to their capacity. The Prophet Elisha suited and proportioned himself to the widow's child, which he designed to recover to life ; in the same manner do you proportion and adapt yourself to the understanding of the people whom you undertake to convert. To merit the character of an orator, you should appear so not at court only, but in the city, and I had almost said in the villages. The surest and most infallible mark of a great orator, is to appear so to the multitude ; because the multitude is the surest and most infallible judge of perfect eloquence. For the perfection of eloquence consists in producing a certain degree of impresson and sensation in the mind and heart. When the multitude therefore is touched and affected to this degree, the orator has done all that eloquence is capable of producing to affect his hearers.

The whole of eloquence may be reduced to these three particulars, to instruct, to please and move. To know indeed how and by what means all this may be done, is peculiar to the masters in this art ; but to know whether really it be done or not, is decided by the public : And the decision of the multitude thereupon, is a supreme judgment, from which it is not lawful to appeal.

A preacher speaks before a numerous audience, every man hearkens with attention to him ; there is a general silence accompanied with a vivacity in the looks of the assembly ; every thing he says, seems true, is approved and acquiesced in ; they perceive their souls seized with I know not what pleasure, and held fast by some secret charm as with an invisible chain ; they are afflicted, grieve and weep ; they rejoice, are ashamed, repent, admire, fear, are touched, moved and transported. What more can you desire or expect in order to pronounce him a great preacher ? Perhaps the opinion of men of learning ?

But don't you know, that both the learned and the ignorant multitude never are divided in their opinions on the subject of a great master.

It is by the sound which the strings of an instrument make, that we perceive the masterly skill of him who touches them : In like manner we discover the merit of the preacher by the emotions which his discourse raises in the soul ; and to find this out it is not absolutely necessary to hear him, it is sufficient only to observe slightly and at a glance, in what manner he is heard.

If while Crassus and Antony were disputing the prize of eloquence at Rome, the people had been asked, which was the most eloquent of the two, they would either have been in suspense which of these two famous orators to give the advantage to, or would have declared some for Crassus, others for Antony ; but none, I dare say, would have preferred Philip to them, who otherwise was a polite, easy and agreeable orator. Ask all Paris whether father Bourdaloue was not one of the greatest preachers in the kingdom, and the whole city will answer without hesitating, that undoubtedly he was. So true is it, that he is a great preacher, who appears so to the multitude.

Sing to please me and the Muses, said an ingenious master to his scholar, whom he saw singing negligently to the people. And I for my part would say to you, my dear Brutus, when you harangue the multitude as it is your custom to do, speak both to mine and to the people's capacity : For by this means they will be sensible of the impressions which you shall make upon them, and I shall apprehend how and why these impressions are made both upon myself and upon the people.

Do you then make no difference; it will be said, between an intelligent hearer, and one who is not so ? Yes, very much, as I have already shewn. The learned and judicious hearer is not only sensibly

touched, charmed and ravished, but at the same time, he knows by what secret springs of eloquence the orator raises all these different emotions in him; which secret springs are all so many mysteries to an illiterate hearer. It is true, his soul is affected in the same manner with the others, but he does not apprehend by what artful address these sentiments are produced in him. In a word, the intelligent hearer judges of the merit and excellency of the orator by sense and idea, the ignorant by sense only: both however from the same idea of it, and the judgment of both is equally infallible.

Quintilian makes the same difference between the ignorant and the learned hearer. The ignorant is sensible of the pleasure which arises from a discourse composed according to the rules of art; The learned is alike sensible of this pleasure and more exquisitely; but he is farther acquainted with the cause and reason of it. We may conclude then, that a man never can arrive at the reputation of a great preacher, while he appears such only to the learned; for they do not make up the multitude; and he never can in the judgment of the public, deserve the glorious title of a great orator, unless he appears such to the multitude. Cicero was so well satisfied of the truth of this, as to say, In other arts I would chuse the approbation of the learned, but in eloquence, I desire the applause of the people.

Antimachus, a celebrated poet, reading his works one day to a numerous assembly that was gathered about him, took notice that the croud on a sudden disappeared; and Plato only remained with him. No matter, says he, I will however continue reading; for Plato alone is to me a whole audience. I approve the conduct of this poet. A poem is not a work suited to the capacity of every man; it is above common understandings, and it is sufficient to have it pass

the approbation of a few : But for a sermon, or a discourse composed according to the rules of eloquence, it should particularly be popular ; that is, proportioned to the sense and ideas of the people. Had Demosthenes seen himself like the poet, on a sudden left alone in the midst of Athens, without any other hearer than Plato, believe me, he would at that moment have been silent, and put an end to his harangue. It is the multitude we harangue, it is the people we preach to ; the discourse therefore should be such as may be understood and approved, and even applauded by the people. Upon this principle I make no scruple to advance this great maxim, and I maintain it to be true, that no man can be an orator without being popular ; and that for this reason : Because an orator is one particularly designed to speak to the people, and it is part of his character always to speak those things which are proper to persuade. If it were the orator's business to speak only to a few chosen persons of the clearest and most refined reasons, perhaps there might be no necessity for his being popular : But he is born for the people, which the preacher ought never to forget in the composition of his discourses, but should repeat continually to himself, It is my business to speak to the people.

By people, in matters of eloquence, is meant a great number of persons ; not only all those that are of an obscure birth and mechanical employment, but all those who are illiterate and unlearned, who have neither much wit and penetration, nor a clear judgment. By the people are meant all these several persons : What a great quantity of people there is sometimes to be seen in the most noble and illustrious audiences ? Have a care how you entertain any mistaken ideas of this popularity, without which there can be no sound eloquence ; and do not imagine that to be popular, is the same with being low and

fervile; There is an infinite distance between popularity and meanness: In the pulpit nothing should be base; on the contrary, every thing should be noble and elevated; every thing should have a resemblance to the majesty and greatness of the character of an ambassador of Jesus Christ, and of a minister of the gospel.

Nor does this popularity consist in saying things rudely and without any air of politeness. It is as averse to ill-breeding as to meanness: It admits of great politeness and whatever is finely and delicately conceived, is most suitable to it. A preacher who is without education, makes use of terms borrowed from the dregs of the people, and falls into the ways of speaking peculiar to the stalls and markets. He fills his discourses with comparisons and similitudes taken from objects which present the mind with mean and homely images. He expresses himself unpolitely and clownishly; but sure you will not call such an one a popular preacher: If you will do him justice, call him rather a rude and unpolished preacher, one fitter for the mob than the people.

Who can endure the idea which some preachers form of popularity? who, provided they give themselves particular airs of familiarity and conversation, go as I may say, cheek by jowl with their hearers, and speak to them in their own way, call this being popular. They are mistaken; for this familiar, this open and communicative manner is by no means agreeable with that grave and majestic air which is inseparable from christian eloquence.

Simplicity of discourse and popularity, are two distinct things, we may have one and yet want the other, with this difference, that a discourse may be simple without being popular, but cannot be popular without being simple. It is with the simplicity of a discourse, as with simplicity in the commerce of the world. We call him a man simple in his behaviour,

who is a stranger to all doubling, disguise and imposture, a man who has nothing affected or put on in his whole person. If your discourse is of this character, it will have all the charms of an agreeable simplicity ; and that it may, it is necessary there should be a concurrence of many sorts of simplicity ; as first, a simplicity of design : Every thing should have a reference and tendency to the same end ; the view and attention of the hearer should never be distracted by a multitude of objects : The great art is to unite them wholly in one single point ; and in this sense simplicity of design is nothing but the unity of the discourse ; for what can be more simple than that which is one ? There should be likewise simplicity of stile ; in this there should be nothing affected, nothing of the bombast ; day and night are not more opposite than simplicity, and a swelling affectation : Nothing shews more the constraint of a too great exactness in the composition. There should be also a simplicity of ornaments ; by which is meant that there should not be too much of them : Beauty is not simple, when it is set off too much ; if it were necessary to be any way faulty, it should be rather in a defect than in an excess of ornaments ; this being one of those things, wherein too little is less shocking than too much. Ornaments in a discourse are like diamonds in our dress ; the cloaths are the richer, but the person is not at all the more agreeable or beautiful for them. We should use the ornaments of eloquence with sobriety and modesty. If you distribute them in your discourses profusely and without measure, they will be so far from heightening the beauty, that they will cast a blemish upon their lustre : Nay, the few wherewith you are allowed to embellish your discourses, should not glitter too much in the eyes of your hearers. Observe the pieces of the most eminent painters, and you will find, that it is not the brightness of the colours which strikes you ;

they are simple, and the splendour of them, if there is any in them, never goes beyond nature. There should be a simplicity of proofs: These if you would have them simple, should not be too elaborate, but taken from the matter of your subject, so as they may seem naturally to offer themselves to your hands. Take care to explain them clearly and distinctly, without any confusion or perplexity; and let them tend directly to the end you aim at, without any compass or digression. In short, let there be nothing in them but what is proper to them: Avoid the mistake of certain preachers, who collect a confused and undigested heap out of every thing that they find in their way, and believe every thing is good that may serve to encrease the bulk of the discourse: Thus the mixture of different bodies corrupts the purity of water, and alters its simplicity.

Where will the preacher find models of this amiable, and at the same time noble and majestic simplicity? Where will he find any more perfect, than in the discourses which Jesus Christ hath left us in his gospel? Were ever greater things said, or said more simply? The other books of scripture as divine as they are, do not yet come near them. Here we have indeed throughout the word of the Lord, but as it has been conveyed to us by different instruments, it favours something of the imperfection of these instruments; as we see water, how clear soever it may be at the fountain head, contracts the smell of those subterraneous channels through which it flows. The words which come immediately from a Prince's mouth, have always a simple and majestic air, which they lose in the mouth of his ambassadors. It is always indeed the prince who speaks, but it is the prince speaking sometimes by himself, sometimes by another. When the Lord was pleased to make use of Isaiah and Amos; for example, he was so far from changing the particular genius of their minds, which

they had received from birth and education; that he adapted himself to it; preserving them by his extraordinary assistance from all error and falshood, not from all the defects of stile and elocution. Does not St. Paul confess, that he is unskilful in speech though not in knowledge? Isaiah being born a prince, his discourses are more polite, elegant and noble; and as Amos was a shepherd, his manner of expressing himself is something coarse and rustic. We ought not therefore to be surprized, if we find some obscure and perplexed places in the sacred writers, and others that are not very conformable with the rules of a discourse: Every thing in them is true, but every thing is not perfect as to the manner of conceiving and expressing things. The bark wherewith they have cloathed the word of God is sometimes, if I may venture to say it, a little rough. But with the gospels it is not so: There the Lord hath spoken to us in these last times by his son, who was filled with all the treasures of knowledge and wisdom, who was ignorant of nothing which was necessary to be spoken; nor of the manner wherein it should be spoken; which he proportioned as much as possible to the capacity of our minds, notwithstanding the depth and sublimity of the mysteries, that are explained by him. Here we see nothing defective, nothing that has the least tincture of human weakness and imperfection. Never was there opened so eloquent a mouth, and all who heard him might with reason cry out, Never man spake like this man. Here then we are to learn the art of uniting in our discourses, the most noble popularity with the most majestic simplicity.

The several marks of this simplicity peculiar to eloquence may be easily observed in the sermons of some preachers, who have already a great name in the world: However all this notwithstanding I make no scruple to say, that they never will have the advantage

to be perfectly popular. What then do we mean by popular? And wherein, in our opinion, consists this noble, elevated, grave, majestic, simple, polite popularity, without which a discourse deserves not to be called eloquent? It consists in the proportion between every thing the preacher says, and the common and ordinary way of thinking and perceiving, which is to be found generally in all mankind: Do but once hit luckily on this proportion, and you are in the ready way to popularity.

Some preachers imagine they speak wonders, when they say things which none besides them would have ever thought of, and express them in an unexpected manner. Then the swellings of the proud Pharisee seize them: Heaven be praised, cry they, we are not like other men; we neither think, nor speak like them. What is this but to be lost, to be bewildered and rave? For your part, let me advise you to place all your care and ambition in thinking as the rest of mankind think, in having the same sense of things, that they have, and speaking of them as they do. Let every one have it in his power to say when he shall hear you, methinks I should have both thought and expressed myself exactly as the preacher has done: This point once gained, you may with good reason value yourself upon having attained to the most difficult and most beautiful part of eloquence.

There are certain ideas common to the minds of all men; certain sentiments too on every subject common to the hearts of all men. Endeavour with application to discover these ideas, and discern these sentiments. Ask yourself, what thoughts would all men have upon this subject, were they to follow the pure light of reason? What would be their sentiments if they were to yield to the natural motions of their heart? They would be such or such. Let us then conform ours to them.

There is an universal reason prevailing in the minds of men, whence these common sentiments and ideas take their origin : It is to be discerned at all times, in all places, and in all persons ; it never changes, but is always the same, in some manner partaking of the immutability of God's infinite knowledge, whereof it is a ray and emanation. Every thing in our discourses, that shall agree with this universal reason, will be always excellent and beautiful, equally esteemed by all nations, and in all ages. This superior and predominant reason should be always consulted by the orator, from this immense store he should borrow all he has to say, and the manner of saying it.

It is not the taste of one particular age or nation, that you should make your rule. These particular tastes, whatever vogue they may be in, are sometimes very vicious ; they are observed therefore to pass like so many torrents, or rather like so many fashions that succeed one another. To-day one mode of preaching prevails, to-morrow another : We strive to accommodate ourselves to these different tastes, and swim with the current of the age, and so are led into mistakes ; because they are particular tastes that we conform to. Whereas we never err in following the universal taste of mankind ; this is not subject to variation, nor suited to any prevailing fashion. It is essentially and necessarily good ; because it is founded on an universal reason, that is as certain and infallible, as it is invariable. Let this therefore be the principal study of the christian orator. As often as he undertakes to compose a discourse, he should begin by searching into the mind and heart of his hearers in order to discover truly there, what is the sense and what are the thoughts every man has upon the matter to be treated of by him. These sentiments and ideas are in the hearer without his perceiving of it : Because

they are confused and indistinct ; but as the preacher lays them open, the hearers eyes begin to be unclosed, and he discovers a thousand things, which before he never had reflected on. I never thought of it, says he within himself, yet so it is.

What a pleasure is it to the hearer to see the preacher guide him as it were by the hand, and lead him from one idea to another, from one sentiment to another, and to discover within himself, every thing the other declares to him. The sun produces not the colours of those objects, which it enlightens ; it only makes them visible to all the world : In the same manner an excellent preacher does not create any new sentiments and ideas in his hearers, he only discovers, enlivens and makes sensible those which are already in them. As soon as the preacher says a thing, the hearer owns and acknowledges it for his : He subscribes to it with pleasure, because his own mind and his own heart vouch continually the truth of it. It is a part of the perfection of eloquence, never to suspend or interrupt this interior acquiescence, this secret assent proceeding from the persuasion of the mind, and the conviction of the heart : For then every thing has the power of persuasion and conviction, without any the least bias towards falshood : The hearer is unable to resist the force of truth, whereof he has within himself so clear a sense ; and his persuasion is not so much the effect of what the preacher says, as of the dictates of his own mind and heart. Then every thing finds admittance, and steals into the hearer's mind with the greatest pleasure and ease, he understands and comprehends generally every thing, because every thing is agreeable and suited to his own capacity.

Besides this popularity to be observed in the things we speak, such as I have shewn in the preceding

pages, there is a popularity in the manner of speaking them ; and it is not sufficient for the preacher to say always popular things, unless he says them popularly ; that is, in a manner proportioned to the common ways of thinking, perceiving and expressing them. If you propose to excel in this particular, employ constantly such terms as are of common use in the conversation of mankind. Every term that is far-fetched, too curiously studied, of a too modern make, and that has not the stamp of common use, ought not to pass current within the dominions of eloquence. Have a care how you regulate yourself after the ill taste of that Roman orator, who was an elaborate refiner of words, and believed, that there was no speaking well, but in a language not generally used. Remember that use has been and ever will be the absolute master of languages, to which we must submit implicitly.

I do not say, that every common term may be admitted in your discourses ; for there are some so low and so coarse, that it is necessary they should intirely be excluded : All that I affirm is, that no term which is not common should have a place there.

Farther, never employ any figure or turn, which is not as it were the natural overflowing of the mind : To this end labour to distinguish what turns and figures nature itself makes use of according to its different situations, and in all these different states, express yourself as nature itself would do. The turns and figures of your discourse, cannot then fail of being popular, because they will be copied faithfully from the common ways of perceiving and expressing things : For nature is every where the same.

There are preachers who by their particular ways of expressing themselves, make the most popular things in the world unpopular ; they give them such

a foreign and unnatural air by refining, and endeavouring to speak them in an extraordinary manner, that the hearer understands nothing at all, and discerns no footsteps of nature in them. I see nothing so opposite to the business of the pulpit as this spirit of refining things to the utmost pitch. I refer such preachers to St. Chrysostom, to learn from him the language of this eloquent popularity I am speaking of. Never perhaps, had any orator either a more perfect knowledge, or made a better use of it. He does not amuse himself with mere speculative reasonings, which are of no other use but to beat the air, or to feed the mind of his hearers with vain and unprofitable knowledge. The arguments for every thing he says to them, are not far-fetched, he ransacks their hearts and minds, and from thence brings a plentiful supply of them : His whole discourse is seasoned to the taste of his audience, and proportioned to their sentiments and ideas. He is earnestly inquisitive after the most common things, which by his management of them, and by the simple and natural turn he gives them, receive a certain tincture of eloquence, which at the same time both pleases and affects : The learned cannot but admire it, and the multitude cannot but comprehend it. What now are your thoughts of popularity ? Do you esteem it incompatible with the great, the sublime, and the marvellous in the art of eloquence ? Or do you not rather determine, that there can be none of these qualities in eloquence without popularity



CHAP. XI.

Of the Relation between the popular and sublime.

• IF you recollect the idea I have given you, you will find I have affirmed, that by preaching popularly is meant the saying things proportioned to the common sentiments and ideas of mankind; and the saying them likewise in a manner proportioned to the common ways of thinking and expressing ourselves. Now can a discourse have any thing of the sublime without both these proportions? I do not believe that one passage can be produced of all that the ancients have termed sublime, wherein there is not this twofold proportion. Is it not plainly perceivable in that place of Genisis, which one of the greatest masters of eloquence has proposed as a model of the true sublime? Let there be light, and there was light: It was the design of Moses in this place to represent the ready and perfect obedience of the creature to the voice of the Creator. It was necessary according to the common idea implanted in the minds of all men, that in order to make this ready obedience perfect, there should be no distance between the command, and the execution of it: To command and to be obeyed should be the same thing. I conform myself therefore to this common idea, and represent it perfectly, if I think and express myself on this point, in such a manner, as all the world may immediately perceive, that there is not one moment's delay between the command of the Creator, and the obedience of the creature. This Moses has done by saying, Let there be light, and there was light. He has therefore united the popular with the sublime, and

without this union there would have been no sublimity in his thought.

This relation of the popular with the sublime will be farther discernable in some examples which I shall produce more at length : And first out of the prophet *Isaiah** where he represents the fall of the proud king of Babylon ; “ Unfortunate Prince, says he, your death has diffused a general joy and tranquillity over the surface of the earth, the fir trees rejoice at thee, and the cedars of Lebanon, saying, since thou art laid down, no feller is come up against us. Hell from beneath is moved for thee to meet thee at thy coming ; it stirreth up the dead for thee, even all the chief ones of the earth ; it hath raised up from their thrones all the kings of the nations. And they shall speak and say unto thee, Art thou also become weak as we ? Art thou become like unto us ? Thy pomp is brought down to the grave, and the noise of thy viols, the worm is spread under thee, and the worms cover thee. How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning, how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations ? For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the most high. Yet thou shalt be brought down to hell to the sides of the pit. They that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee, and consider thee saying, Is this the man that made the earth to tremble, that did shake kingdoms ? That made the world as a wilderness, and destroyed the cities thereof ? All the kings of the nations, even all of them lie in glory, every one in his own house. But thou art cast out of thy grave like an

* *Isa.* xiv. 8: &c

“ abominable branch. Thou shalt not be joined
 “ with them in buaial, because thou hast destroyed
 “ thy land and slain thy people : The seed of evil-
 “ doers shall never be removed. Prepare slaughter
 “ for his children, for the iniquity of their fathers, that
 “ they do not rise nor possess the land nor fill the face
 “ of the earth with cities.”

If the sublime be not visible in this discourse, I cannot tell where it is to be found. The quiet of the earth, the joy of the fir trees and cedars at the death of the king of Babylon, the disorder of hell, the dead awakening, the kings rising from their thrones at the arrival of this prince in the other world, and the people looking down upon him in the abyss wherein he was fallen, is not all this sublime and at the same time popular? For do not all these ideas, how sublime soever they may be, include these common sentiments and ideas which are generally entertained among men? And are not these sentiments and ideas expressed in a manner very conformable to the common ways of our expressing ourselves? For example, is not this a common idea, that men should rejoice at the death of one, who disturbs the whole earth, and that this joy should be carried to the very highest degree? But can such an idea be more popularly represented, than in these words, Thy death hath spread a general joy and tranquillity over the whole surface of the earth, the very fir-trees of our forests, and the cedars of Lebanon rejoice at it, saying, since thou art laid down no feller is come up against us. Is not this a common idea, viz. That there is scarce any scourge more terrible than a prince that is extravagantly ambitious, who every where carries terror and consternation with him? But is not this idea expressed as popularly as can be in these terms, Hell from beneath is moved at his coming, it stirreth up the dead for thee, &c? The curiosity and earnestness men generally have to see one, who has made a noise

in the world, is a very natural sentiment, and could the prophet describe it more popularly than by saying, All they that see thee shall narrowly look upon thee and consider thee, &c. ? St. Chrysostom, who knew how to be sublime in those places, wherein it was necessary to be so, is yet never so without being popular. Observe some passages of his admirable discourses to the people of Constantinople on the subject of Eutropius, a patrician, and consul of the Empire ; who having incurred the displeasure of the Emperor Arcadius, was obliged to take sanctuary in a church, contrary to a law prohibiting any one so to do which he himself had published. St. Chrysostom takes occasion from this example to set forth the vanity of human things, and the uncertainty of great advancements. “ Now, says he, if ever, have
 “ we reason to cry vanity of vanities. Where now,
 “ says he to Eutropius, are they, who served you,
 “ who made the croud give way to you in the streets,
 “ and bestowed high encomiums on you ? They
 “ have deserted you, they have renounced your
 “ friendship, and endeavour to secure themselves at
 “ your expence : But this is not our practice. The
 “ church which has been persecuted by you, opens
 “ her bosom to receive you, and the theatres which
 “ you have encouraged, which have cost you so dear,
 “ and so often drawn upon us your indignation, have
 “ betrayed you. I say not this to insult a person who
 “ is fallen, but to uphold those that are still standing.
 “ He adds, speaking of Eutropius, yesterday, when
 “ men came from the palace to drag him hence by
 “ violence, he fled for refuge to the consecrated vessels with the countenance of a dead person, with
 “ trembling limbs, a broken voice and stammering
 “ tongue. He exhorts his hearers to compassionate
 “ him ; You will say that he has enacted several
 “ laws to shut up this asylum ; but he has by experience learned the evil he has done, he has himself

“ first violated the law, and his disgrace is an instruc-
 “ tion to all the world. The altar seems at present
 “ more terrible, while it keeps this lion chained, and
 “ resembles the picture of a prince trampling under
 “ foot the captive and conquered barbarians. And
 “ in another place, Have I softened your minds,
 “ overcome your passion, extinguished your inhumana-
 “ nity, and excited pity? Yes, I am persuaded I
 “ have : both your faces, and the torrents of tears
 “ that flow from you are evidences of it. Let us go
 “ therefore and prostrate ourselves at the Emperor’s
 “ feet, or rather let us implore the God of mercy to
 “ appease him. He is already very much changed ;
 “ for when he was told that Eutropius had taken re-
 “ fuge in this sacred place, he spoke to all the court
 “ which was desirous to exasperate him against the
 “ criminal, and demanded his execution. He shed
 “ tears, and speaking of the holy table whither he was
 “ fled for protection, he assuaged his anger. Should
 “ you after this continue yours, what favor would
 “ you ever merit? How would you approach the
 “ holy mysteries and ask pardon for your sins? Let
 “ us rather beseech the God of mercy to deliver this
 “ unhappy man from death, and give him time to
 “ expiate his crimes.

If a man has any sense of things, he must confess,
 that the sublime and popular prevail equally in this
 discourse. For properly speaking it is by sense only
 that we discern the true sublime. I hear a discourse,
 and the longer I hear it the more I feel my soul en-
 larged within me, insensibly elevated and raised :
 Methinks the human nature within me is ennobled,
 and that the orator imparts all his greatness to me. A
 generous pride takes fast possession of me, a secret
 joy mixed with admiration and astonishment is dif-
 fused throughout my heart, as if I were myself the
 author of the things of which I am only a hearer. I
 feel myself on a sudden transported, ravished, and

carried away by an invincible power, which forces my persuasion. When I am sensible of this, I affirm without any fear of being mistaken, that there is a great deal of the sublime in this discourse, that the middle way of writing could never produce such impressions. Where there is nothing but bombast, magnificence, or harmony, the powers of the soul are not thus moved; the only way these act upon it is by tickling the ear, soothing the mind, and pleasing the imagination. As for the low way of writing, it humbles, debases and contracts the soul. St. Austin having produced a place in the prophet Amos to shew, that true and sublime eloquence is to be met with in our sacred authors adds, "What necessity is there for saying, how fine this is? What a sweet and forcible impression this makes upon the mind and heart of those, who read and comprehend it? What necessity is there for saying this to any one, who does not perceive it?" By which this great man meant, that there are beauties in the discourses of men truly eloquent, which are never to be comprehended, if we have not taste enough to be sensible of them at first: The only reason whereof that can be given is this, that the greatest beauties of eloquence consist in certain sentiments, which they excite in the soul, and which charm, ravish and transport it. If you are not of such a genius as to be susceptible of these sentiments, these beauties will lie eternally concealed, and be unknown to you. In vain would any one undertake to make you comprehend them by dint of reasoning; he never could effect it; because to be sensible of these beauties, and to comprehend them, is the same thing. Hence we so often see, that what charms some, makes no impression upon others; because these are capable of having a true sense of them, which the others are not. You may present, if you please, the finest colours in the world to a blind man, but how should he be touched with them who has no eyes? The

inward sense we have of things is, as it were, the clearest eye of the soul, whereby it discovers and perceives the great, the sublime and the beautiful, which make up the highest perfection of eloquence.

They who preach, have so great things to publish to the people, and matters of so sublime a nature to keep up to in their discourses, that they cannot too much study to inure their minds to the great, and the sublime; they cannot too much improve themselves in noble inclinations, nor too much accustom themselves to conceive elevated sentiments, and form solid and exalted thoughts. The preachers of this character only are able to produce any thing marvellous, and worthy of posterity.

Let nothing then escape you, that may contribute to this perfect elevation of the mind and heart. The ancients thought it proper for the orator to carry his views as far as heaven, and that he should not be a stranger to celestial things. Why was this, but that he might be filled with those great ideas, which the knowledge of heaven inspires; and that descending afterwards to things here below, he might think and speak of them in a noble and exalted manner. What an advantage in this point have preachers above profane orators? For if the knowledge of the stars, and the motion of the heavens, &c. were so fitting to exalt their souls, how very useful in order to the attaining to this point of greatness, and elevation, which eloquence requires, how very assisting, I say, to all preachers must be the knowledge of those great objects which faith displays to them? As of an infinite God, of the eternity of rewards and punishments, &c. Nothing is greater than what we believe; nothing likewise is greater than what we have to say; let us endeavour therefore to say it in the greatest and most sublime manner.

For what reason think you are there more eminent preachers formed at Paris, than any where besides?

Or to speak more properly, why are there scarce any great preachers formed in any other place? One of the principal causes of this is, that the great objects, which are continually observed there, raise and sustain the soul, and by necessary consequence, infuse noble sentiments and thoughts into it. He who in the country would have crawled upon the earth, at Paris soars high in his flight towards the skies. It is true, wit, genius, learning and application are not wanting in other places, but those objects are which animate and raise the composer. It is very hard, if not impossible, to rise, when there is nothing about you that can furnish you with wings, wherewithal to take your flight: when on the contrary every thing debases, lessens, and continually reminds you of your own meanness.

What then must a young preacher do to make up, if possible, the want of that great theatre, on which providence has not placed him? No other help remains for him, but to accustom himself betimes to breathe the air of the sublime and great in the commerce of those eminent men who have transmitted their thoughts to posterity, above all in the reading of the holy scriptures. For if in the opinion of one of the great masters of eloquence, we should study the marvellous, the supernatural and divine, where should we better find all this, than in those authors, whom heaven itself has inspired? These are as it were so many sacred springs, which send forth vapours of an enlivening virtue, that overspread the soul, and animate the coldest spirits. When we have once attained to the perfection of having a quick sense of things, what a sublimity do we easily perceive in the thoughts, expressions, turns and figures of the sacred writings?

See Jeremiah representing the desolation of Judea by the king of Babylon, while he was besieging the

city of Jerusalem.* “ The Lion, says he, is come
 “ out of his thicket, and the destroyer of the Gentiles
 “ is on his way. He is gone forth from his place to
 “ make the land desolate, and thy cities shall be laid
 “ waste, without an inhabitant—In that day the heart
 “ of the king shall perish, and the heart of the princes
 “ and the priests shall be astonished, and the pro-
 “ phets shall wonder. Then said I, ah Lord ! surely
 “ thou hast greatly deceived this people and Jerusa-
 “ lem, saying, ye shall have peace, whereas the sword
 “ reacheth unto the soul—My bowels, my bowels, I
 “ am pained at my very heart, my heart maketh a
 “ noise in me, I cannot hold my peace, because thou
 “ hast heard, O my soul, the sound of the trumpet,
 “ the alarm of war. Destruction upon destruction is
 “ cried, for the whole land is spoiled, and my cur-
 “ tains in a moment. How long shall I see the
 “ standard, and hear the sound of the trumpet ?—
 “ I beheld the earth and, lo ! it was without form
 “ and void ; and the heavens, and behold they had
 “ no light. I beheld the mountains and lo ! they
 “ trembled, and all the hills moved lightly. I be-
 “ held and, lo ! there was no man, and all the birds
 “ of the heavens were fled. I beheld and, lo ! the
 “ fruitful place was a wilderness—And when thou
 “ art spoiled what wilt thou do, O unhappy daughter
 “ of Sion ? though thou cloathest thyself with crim-
 “ son, though thou deckest thee with ornaments of
 “ gold ; though thou rentest thy face with painting,
 “ in vain shalt thou make thyself fair, thy lovers will
 “ despise thee, they will seek thy life.” Does not
 the spirit of the prophet seem to possess you, to
 agitate you to animate, ravish and transport you be-
 sides, and even above yourself ? With what a sublime
 air does he proclaim the ruin of the king of Babylon
 and of his Empire ?† “ Thus saith the Lord God of

* Jer. iv. 7, &c.

† Jer. xxv. 15, &c.

“Israel unto me, take the wine cup of this fury at my
 “hand, and cause all the nations to whom I send
 “thee to drink it. And they shall drink and be
 “moved and be mad because of the sword that I will
 “send among them. Then took I the cup at the
 “Lord’s hand and made all the nations to drink, unto
 “whom the Lord had sent me. To wit, Jerusalem,
 “and the cities of Judah, and the kings thereof, and
 “the princes thereof, to make them a desolation, an
 “astonishment, an hissing, and a curse, as it is this
 “day. Pharaoh king of Egypt, and all the kings of the
 “north, far and near, one with another, and all the
 “kingdoms of the world, which are upon the face of
 “the earth, and the king of Sheshack shall drink after
 “them.—Does not this discourse make those impres-
 “sions upon all, who hear and comprehend it, that
 “we have said were the certain marks of the great
 “and sublime.”

There is scarce any thing in my opinion that can
 contribute more to raise the soul of the christian ora-
 tor, and inspire him with a high idea of his august
 ministry, than the idea of what his termed beau-
 tiful in eloquence, if it is well examined and under-
 stood.

We hear people cry every day in our audiences,
 this is fine ; but do they understand what they say ?
 I dare affirm that very few do : They make a noise,
 they know not why. For what is this, which in
 matters of eloquence we term fine, and have so often
 in our mouths ? We will endeavour, if possible, to
 give men a just sense of it.

It is nothing else, if we would define it rightly, but
 an expression and image of that universal reason,
 which is in all men, whereof we have spoken in ano-
 ther place ; which reason is always sound and pure :
 because it is a participation, and emanation of a Be-
 ing infinitely beautiful, I mean God himself, the

original and pattern of all the beauties diffused throughout all beings.

It is evident therefore, that every thing in a discourse which is conformable to this universal reason, must be necessarily beautiful, since it is at the same time conformable to the supreme and essential beauty. Plato, as destitute as he was of the lights of faith, had yet a sufficient greatness and elevation of soul to go back as far as the first spring of beauty. For observe in what manner this great man explains himself, who was as admirable an orator as a philosopher. *The mind of man, says he, partakes of the divine essence. Now this essence is beautiful, wise, true, good, in a word every thing that we can imagine most perfect. Whence he draws this consequence, that the beautiful in a discourse is derived from this first being, which is essentially and naturally beautiful.

These ideas of what is beautiful, true, good, &c. which are to be found in the bottom of the soul, and are communicated from that being which is infinitely beautiful, are strengthened and cherished by the orator's wisdom, probity, and virtue : and when they are so, are as it were the wings whereby the soul is upheld, and raised to that degree of beauty, wherein the whole perfection of eloquence consists, and without which it loses all its force, sinks, and must certainly become low and creeping.

From this definition of beauty, which we have given, it follows, that in an eloquent discourse every thing should be beautiful, every thing true, good, wise and reasonable : Because an eloquent discourse should be the image of reason, and reason the image of that infinitely beautiful being, who is himself, goodness, truth, wisdom, and the most excellent reason.

But to make a discourse beautiful, it is not sufficient that all the parts which compose it be so, there

* Dial Phædr.

should be besides a proportion, order, and contrivance in all of them, without which the discourse is no longer an image of that being, which is infinitely beautiful : since this being is itself essential order, and in all the works directed by infinite wisdom, all proportions are constantly well observed. Without this proportion and suitableness of all the parts of your discourse, they may indeed be beautiful, and if you will, perfectly beautiful, but the discourse will not be so : Beauties irregularly disposed in a discourse and misplaced, cease to be beauties, and are so far from embellishing, that they disfigure it.

If the whole discourse should be beautiful, it should not however be so equally throughout, for this would make it insupportable. There is nothing in the universe more beautiful than the sun, but if every thing in it were sun, what would become of all the beauty of the world. The beauties of a discourse should be various, some great, others of a more moderate sort, others again more minute than these. Because all places of a discourse are in the same degree susceptible of what we term beautiful in eloquence. It depends therefore upon the ingenuity and prudence of the orator to distribute all these different beauties properly, to assign each its particular place, and to distinguish the parts of a discourse, which require the greater beauties, from others wherein those of a middle or more inferior kind are sufficient : In doing whereof there is need certainly of a good genius, and an almost infinite degree of art ; the orator herein in some measure resembling a fine painter, whom it concerns to know in what particular places of his picture it is necessary for him to dispose the shades and light.

This moment a reflection comes into my mind, which it is convenient to set down here. What an advantage towards excelling in the beautiful part of

eloquence have the sacred above the prophane orators, provided they understand how to make a good use of it? For in these as well as the others, it is not only allowable to compose their discourses after the model of that being which is infinitely beautiful; but they may, nay it is their duty to make such discourses as are but one contexture of thoughts, words, terms, expressions, figures and images, which have proceeded from the mouth of this infinitely beautiful being. For he has spoken and his words have been faithfully collected, and have descended down to us; it is our fault therefore, if we do not use them, and by this means attain to the perfection of making almost divine discourses; what an infinite and inexhaustible spring of beauties, contributing to the advancement of eloquence, are the holy scriptures? Had the Ciceros and the Demosthenes had the opportunities of borrowing from hence, would not their discourses think you have abounded with beauties still more perfect, than those, which after so many ages we continue to admire?

The beauties of eloquence which the orator takes care to form after a model so accomplished, as the Being, which is infinitely beautiful, are certainly immortal beauties: Because they in some manner partake of the eternity of their model.

I repeat it, and say, that a preacher cannot endeavour too much to elevate and enlarge his soul, especially when he is actually employed in the composition of these discourses. Then it is he should place every thing before his eyes, that can inspire him with sublimity. Sometimes he should ask himself, what would St. Chrysostom have said or thought on this subject? Under what images and figures, would the prophets have proclaimed this truth to the people? Sometimes again he should ask, what would the T. B. R. G. M. have thought of what I say? What would have been their opinion of it, and what

judgment will a great and numerous audience make of it, when I shall appear before them? No motive has more power to excite us, and keep our soul always in that exalted situation wherein it necessarily should be, in order to produce something worthy of future ages than to represent ourselves, that we are to undergo the censure of a solemn and inexorable tribunal, and to shew ourselves upon a theatre, where an infinite number of men of elevated wit, and wisdom will be judges and witnesses of all our thoughts. Do not therefore amuse yourselves, when you are composing your discourses, with polishing and refining your style, a serious concern for such trifles as these is more unworthy of the christian, than of the prophane orator. Give up your soul intirely to the noble transports of a holy enthusiasm, and an eloquent fury, which may prompt it to say and think great things. It is a thousand times more eligible to commit faults and aim at the sublime, than to commit none, and confine yourselves to the middle way of writing. It is with the sublime in eloquence, says a great master in this art; as with an immense store of wealth, which with all our care we cannot inspect so nearly in every particular, and wherein something after all our diligence must be neglected. On the contrary, it is almost impossible for a man of a low and moderate genius to commit faults. For as he runs no hazard, and never soars, he is always secure; whereas a man of a great and towering spirit is exposed by the greatness of his own genius to difficulty and danger.

Let not the fear of making some false steps prevent your aiming at the sublime, and persuade you to confine yourself to the middle way of writing. Consider that the sacred should as much, and more than the prophane orator, since he has nobler objects to represent, soar high, take wing, be sometimes in a sort of rage, be transported, and walk often on the very brinks.

of a precipice. For high and elevated places have almost always a terrible depth at some little distance from them. The road indeed is safest which lies through smooth and even ways, but is lower and more obscure. They who crawl upon the ground are in no danger of falling, as they are, who run ; but it is no honour to the one that they do not fall, whereas the others, even when they fall, acquire glory. The rocks and precipices through which the orator directs his course, make up all the value of his eloquence, or at least heighten the lustre of it. With what vivacity, attention and admiration do we look upon those men, who hang as I may say in the air, seem every moment ready to fall, yet keep themselves up ? We admire that generally, which happens contrary to our expectation, that which has been hazarded successfully, that which strikes and amazes us with the great difficulty that accompany it. There is nothing wonderful in the pilot's skill, while he is in the midst of a calm sea, he enters the harbour without any one's taking notice of it, or commending him : But in a tempest when the ropes rattle, the mast gives way, and the rudder cracks, then it is that we extol his skill and compare him to the sea divinities. Every thing that is elevated strikes us to a certain point and measure, but the most exact and nice judgment is necessary to distinguish magnificence from enormous greatness, a regular from a monstrous height, bombast from the sublime.

When I exhort preachers to aim with all their power at the greatness and sublimity of christian eloquence, I address myself to those only, who have some sort of genius for it, that is to say, whose mind and heart are capable of noble thoughts and sentiments. All who make preaching their employment, have not received from nature this happy disposition to be sublime ; nay we may be assured, that the number of them is very inconsiderable, since it is so uncommon.

to hear any preachers, whose discourses discover a taste and idea of the true sublime. A great soul, such as this perfection of eloquence requires, is an extraordinary gift of heaven, and in some manner miraculous, heaven scarce producing one of this noble stamp from one age to another.

Examine therefore, and be well acquainted with yourselves, before you determine what kind of eloquence is best suited to you. If you perceive not within you this greatness and elevation of soul, forever give over all pretensions to the sublime: There is here no mediocrity which you may be allowed, or with which the public will be satisfied: This mediocrity in the sublime immediately degenerates into a low and abject meanness. If in spite of your genius you will endeavour to soar above it, you will infallibly take the phantom and appearance of the sublime for the sublime itself; I mean, you will run into fustian, and vain swelling words that deserve contempt rather than admiration.

We are not however to imagine, that the sublime is the pure work of nature; art must contribute something to it. Nature supplies matter, and this gives form. For what is the sublime considered in itself, and in its principle? It consists in noble thoughts and elevated sentiments, which a soul born to what they call great in eloquence naturally produces: But this is not sufficient, these thoughts and sentiments must be worked up; they must be so represented and expressed, that the orator may transfuse all their greatness and elevation into the very soul of his hearers; and this is the effect of art. For to accomplish this, particular terms, expressions, turns, figures and images must be made use of; order, contrivance, and composition is necessary, without which, that which in the conception of the soul was sublime, very often ceases to be so when uttered by the mouth. Sometimes a sublime thought should be expressed simply,

the very simplicity of the expression making all the sublimity of it, whereof there would be no appearance if you were to express it in pompous and magnificent terms. God said let there be light, and there was light; here there is a great deal of the sublime, for which in another place we have given reasons. Change now the turn of the expression and say, The supreme Lord of Nature at a word only formed the light, and though the thought is still the same, the sublime is wanting.

Here the orator is sublime in a copiousness of words, and a plenty that continually encreases; whereby he unfolds the object, discovers, and makes others sensible of all its greatness: In another place, his sublimity is owing to the rapidity and vehemence of his eloquence; witness Demosthenes and Cicero. The eminency of one consists in being close and concise; that of the other in being more large and diffusive; the first like thunder or a tempestuous whirlwind, lays waste, as it were, and violently drives every thing before him; the other like a great flame, devours and consumes all in his way with a fire that is never wholly extinguished, that is scattered variously throughout his works, and gathers new strength in proportion to its progress. The sublime of Demosthenes is doubtless most serviceable in strong aggravations and violent passions, when it is necessary to damp and amaze the audience; the sublime of Cicero is preferable, when we are to steal into the hearts of our hearers, and heal their minds, as it were with a refreshing dew. How much of the sublime is to be attributed to a lively and elevated imagination, which being influenced by an extraordinary emotion of the soul, and a spirit of enthusiasm, when at any time the subject requires it, describes things in such a manner and so artfully, that it looks as if the orator saw them with his own eyes, and was laying them before the eyes of his hearers. Such lively and natural descrip-

tions as these, give spirit and warmth to the discourse ; and if artificially blended with the proofs that are contained in it, not only persuade, but subdue as I may say, and captivate the audience. Those things we call figures in eloquence, are of wonderful use for the improvement of the sublime, when we have the skill to make a proper application of them, and give them such a turn, as is necessary to keep up their grandeur. They are like a dress well fancied, which heightens the agreeableness and beauty of the wearer : But the sublime likewise is on its part wonderfully useful in setting off figures, because it conceals the artificial disposal of them from the hearer's eyes. This is the judicious reflection of one of the most eminent masters in the art of the sublime. If the art is visible with which the figure is worked up, it never has its desired effect, the hearer immediately grows diffident, and can scarce forbear shewing a dislike of it ; because he imagines we endeavour to deceive and surprize him. Now nothing is more convenient to disguise all the art of figures than the sublime. For where they are covered as I may say with that great splendor which the sublime reflects upon them, the art that sets them forth, is not obvious to the eyes ; in this very much resembling the brightness of the stars, which is obscured by the light of the sun. The greatness therefore of the thought should always exceed the beauty of the figure, if you design that the hearer, instead of considering the artful framing of the figures, should be taken up solely with the impressions, which the sublime makes upon his soul. Whence it follows, that great figures and bold metaphors, should be never any where employed, but in great passions, and in the sublime : Because the sublime and the pathetic, which naturally bear down every thing with their impetuosity and violence, require necessarily strong and bold expressions and leave the hearer no time to reflect on the quality of the

expressions ; because he is in an instant as it were ravished and transported besides himself.

The concurrence and conjunction of certain circumstances well chosen, and greatly expressed, contribute much to the sublime, for these two reasons. First, because they heighten the object which they would represent, and give it all the greatness which is necessary to make impression. Secondly, Because they strike and fix attentively the hearer's mind. But have a care how you admit any low and superfluous particularities : For to insist too much on inconsiderable matters, will spoil all.

The composition and order of words to which the cadence and harmony is owing, are likewise of great service to the sublime ; nay, so far, that Cicero, as we have already observed, made no scruple to say, that the thunder of Demosthenes would have had less influence had not the force of them been sustained by harmony. For if this were lost by the irregular disposal of the words, the sublime would be lost with it ; the body whereof would remain only, but the soul which should enliven it, would be wanting ; for which this reason is given by a great master, viz. That harmony is not purely a natural charm in the voice given, in order to persuade and inspire mankind with pleasure ; but it is likewise a wonderful means of raising their souls, and moving their passions, which is remarkable even in those lifeless instruments, the agreeable sounds whereof often fill the soul with transports and admirable raptures, yet these are but images and bare imitations of the voice, which neither speak nor persuade to any thing. What then shall we not say of this composition of words, which is, as it were, the harmony of a discourse, which not only strikes the ear but the mind, and excites so many various ideas of names, thoughts, and things, so many beauties and elegancies wherewith our soul has a kind of union and affinity, which with the mixture and

diversity of its sounds, steals in upon the minds of men, infuses the very passions of the orator into those who hear him, and unites a sublimity of sense with this construction of the words? Can it after this be denied, that harmony contributes much to the greatness, majesty, and magnificence of a discourse, and to all those other beauties that are contained in it, and that having an absolute power over our minds, it may at all times charm and ravish them.

Lastly, The sublime appears with all its glory, and is most eminently successful when joined with the pathetic; for in St. Austin's opinion, who speaks according to the judgment of all the masters in the art of eloquence, the sublime kind of it is particularly distinguished from the middle sort, by the vehemence of the affections: And certainly, nothing gives more spirit to a discourse, than a well-managed passion spurred on in a proper place. It may be termed a sort of enthusiasm and transport, which enlivens the discourse, and imparts to it in the same manner as supernatural and divine flame and vigour.

From all that has been said, let us conclude in the first place, that it is the sublime only, which makes great orators. How excellent soever we may be in every other kind; for example, in describing the manners of men, in speaking purely, politely, delicately, and elegantly, yet still we excel only in the middle way of writing, which how perfect soever it may be, never made a great orator; Because let its perfection be what it will, it will never have that noble, that marvellous and divine force which strikes and ravishes the hearers. In the second place, let us conclude, that nothing is so necessary as a natural genius to arrive at the sublime; but unless it be under the conduct of art, it is oftentimes blind, and roves it knows not where; which may be easily discerned in the works of those persons who, relying too much upon their genius, give themselves up entirely to it, and

neglect the rules of art. We may observe now and then some happy fallies in their writings, but we soon see them sink very low, or lose themselves in unbeaten ways. The highest perfection therefore of the sublime consists in a perfect union of art with nature,

I see nothing so essential to a preacher, who would advance to any degree of eminence, and keep up his character with dignity, as to be able to distinguish certainly the true sublime from every thing that is not so. This may be done by observing the marks of it, which have already been related by me. But I will give you here one more, which seems to me, as it has done to the most knowing masters, one of the least ambiguous of all, viz. That a thing is truly sublime, when every part of it universally pleases : As for example, when in a multitude of persons of different ages and professions, and of various humours and inclinations, every one has been equally struck with some particular passage of a discourse, the uniform judgment and approbation of so many minds, in so many other respects disagreeing, is a certain and unquestionable proof that there is something of the great and marvellous in it ; and of this the preacher should take particular notice, as he pronounces his discourse : The warmth of his delivery, or his attention to the things he has to speak, should be no hinderance to him from observing curiously the countenance of his hearers, the several motions which his discourse produces in them, and the different degrees of their attention to the matter of it, in proportion as he lays it open to them : He should consider carefully, if I may say so, their very silence, which sometimes is sprightly and lively, and then speaks in favor of the preacher ; sometimes it is faint, languishing and heavy, and says nothing, or enough rather to make him understand that his discourse is bad, or at least but moderately good. The hearer's face, if well

examined, is a faithful mirror that never deceives, wherein the preacher may perceive clearly, the excellencies and weaknesses, the virtues and defects of his sermon. When you know how to read in the eyes and countenance of the croud that hears you, you infallibly read then their approbation or condemnation; with which every reasonable preacher who knows the heart of man, and is able to do himself justice, who studies neither how to flatter himself, nor to put out his own eyes, should pass for an absolute and decisive proof of what is good or bad; for it proceeds from the abundance and effusion of a heart, that naturally, without art and affectation, without so much as thinking on it, and without a possibility of being any way influenced either by flattery or malice, has that moment represented in the face, what is either pleasing or displeasing to it in the person who speaks. It would be a strange fondness and assurance not to say excessive impudence in a preacher to pretend to charge the public with mistake, and to maintain that obstinately to be good, which the public has condemned as bad.

I appeal to the people, said an old Roman, when his friends found fault with some passages of his works. And was he not in the right? Is it not the privilege of the people to give the the final determination of the perfections or imperfections of discourses that are framed purely for them? It was likewise Pomponius's custom to refer himself to the judgment of the people, as to a decision, from which there lay no appeal to any other tribunal. For if, while he was pronouncing them, he perceived that there was in them something not agreeable to the people's taste, which he discovered by I know not what air in the face, silence or manner of attention, which made the orator sensible that what he said was disagreeable, or at least not agreeable enough to them, he made no scruple to

to condemn it, and never failed either to correct, or wholly strike it out. So great a deference he paid to the judgment of the people.

This character which I have just now given, whereby we may discern the true sublime, supposes evidently what I have advanced already, viz. That the sublime and popular always go together. I confess however, that they may be sometimes separated; for as to the popular, it is sufficient, if any thing be proportioned to the common sentiments and ideas of men, and that it be declared in a manner conformable to them; but for the sublime, it is farther necessary, that common sentiments and ideas should have something great in them, and that both the one and the other should be expressed with an air of greatness, that is to say, in noble turns and figures, or elevated expressions; whence it follows, that the popular may be without the sublime, but the sublime cannot be without the popular.

In effect, the sublime would cease to be so, if the popular were abstracted from it, and would be no better than fustian, and a vain pomp of words. For what is fustian, but beautiful and magnificent words without any meaning? Or if they have any, it is no way proportioned to common sentiments and ideas, or to the common matter of expressing them. If what you say, and the manner wherein you say it, is below the common sentiments and ideas, or the common way of saying it, you creep upon the earth; if it is above them, you are lost in the clouds. Be popular, and you will keep a medium; popularity preserves an equal distance between a low meanness, and an excessive elevation. The same may be said of the fine and delicate in a discourse. That is a mistaken delicacy, which is without popularity: If the fine thought for which you applaud yourself, be not a true image and expression of a common sentiment and idea: if the fine turn which you make use of be not formed

after some common way of perceiving and expressing things, all your delicacy degenerates into nicety, and is no more than the empty subtilty of a volatile wit.

Every thing in a discourse should not be sublime or fine and delicate; yet every thing in it should be popular: Popularity should be the foundation of every thing the orator says, in what manner soever he may say it. Whatever character in eloquence you would keep up to, retain that always of the popular; this universally suits every thing. If you represent a common idea in a noble manner, you have then hit on the sublime however, without exceeding the popular. If you express a common sentiment after a fine manner, still you do not quit the popular, and so of others. Is this the idea that you have conceived of the popularity of eloquence? Or have you not rather looked upon it as a quality proper for those only who preach to the vulgar, and by no means fit for their use who preach to the more refined part of the world? Have you not considered it as a talent to be liked well enough in the country, but not at all agreeable to the taste of the court and city?

Think more nobly of popularity: It is adapted both to the polite and uneducated part of mankind; to the court as well as to the city; more particularly indeed to the court, because that is best able to perceive the full beauty of it. It is peculiar only to great orators to be popular; there never was one of a middle rank, who deserved this character. Cherish it therefore above all other qualities of a christian orator, and be persuaded that your excelling in eloquence will only be in such proportion as you shall excel in popularity. Forget none of those means that may enable you to acquire it, such as a knowledge of the world and of the heart, a diligent study of nature, continual reflections on the thoughts and

sentiments of men, as well as on the manner where-
with they express them, and a constant conversation
with antiquity.

Improve yourself night and day with the reading
of St. Chrysostom, who may be called in a singular
manner, the popular preacher : In his writings we
learn how to give every thing we say an air of popu-
larity, by the help whereof a discourse insinuates itself
into the most rebellious minds, and most obdurate
hearts. Nor will this be the only advantage you will
receive from this study ; for you will learn by it,
after his example, to speak always in a practical
manner to your hearers.

CHAP. XII.

*That we should preach in a practical manner, if
we would attain to the end of Eloquence.*

YOU will find, if you reflect upon it, that the
discourses of the generality of our preachers,
are almost all speculative : Whereby I mean not
only those that run upon truths of mere speculation,
wherein the preacher speaks purely for the sake of
speaking, wherein every thing he says, is so uncertain
and abstracted, that men believe he speaks to no one,
and for the service of no one, which was formerly the
way of preaching, but is now reformed ; but I like-
wise understand by it, all those discourses that are
made indeed upon subjects which are in themselves
practical, yet are treated of in a manner altogether
speculative.

This is a fault we are guilty of, when we include a practical truth under general propositions, which as they are not addressed to the hearer, so do they not directly incline him to avoid that which is forbidden, or perform that which is commanded ; for these are two points that every sermon should tend to.

We should love God, fear hell, &c. are practical truths ; these the preacher proposes in a speculative manner ; Hell is to be feared, says he, because the severity of the punishments to be endured there, and the duration of them is infinite. Then he argues for an hour upon the greatness and eternity of these punishments ; after which, closing his discourse, and applying himself to his audience, he says to them, Avoid hell and every thing that may endanger your falling into it, &c. This shews that the conclusion of the sermon is practical, and all the rest speculative, at least speculatively expressed. I would have him say, Be afraid of hell, for if you fall into it, the torments which you will suffer there, and the duration of them will be infinite. These are singular and determinate propositions : I would have him continue his discourse in this manner, never lose sight of his hearers, and so make them sensible of the greatness and eternity of those torments by an actual and personal application of them.

Some perhaps will say, that I am a little too nice, that they do not discern what difference there is between this proposition, Hell is to be feared, because the torments to be endured in it, are of an infinite duration, and this other, Fear hell, because the torments which you will endure there, will be infinite in their duration ; or at least if there is any difference, it is so small a matter as not to be worth observation.

To this I answer, so much the worse for any one who does not see, or is not sensible of this difference,

for it is very considerable. The manner of expressing ourselves in general and indefinite propositions, is always faint and lifeless, whereas particular and determinate propositions give life and spirit to a discourse, and keep up the attention of the hearer, who soon languishes and grows sick if the preacher has not the skill to interest him, and make him take part in every thing he says. Now while the preacher speaks in generals, what interest or concern can the hearer have in them? Nothing affects or moves him but what is particular; he never so much as imagines that the preacher is speaking to him, while he delivers himself in universal terms. He who often asks himself the question, Who is it that the preacher levels his discourse at? Not at me certainly. Why then should I take pains to follow him! Let him go on. So the hearer goes one way and the preacher another.

The greatest secret in the art of eloquence, whereby we may always keep up the attention of the hearer, and prevent its cooling, is to manage so, that at every proposition he may say to himself, it is to me the preacher is speaking, it is my part therefore diligently to hearken to him.

By speaking to any one, is not meant precisely the pronouncing of words, the sound whereof strikes his ears; it is farther necessary that these words should be addressed to him; without this direction, I speak indeed, but I speak to no man. Now there is no directing ourselves to him but by particular and determinate propositions. What do those preachers therefore that run always on universals? They speak, it is true, but to whom? Would you farther have a sensible proof that the preachers of this character are unable to keep up the spirits of an audience, and are good for nothing but to tire it? If you would put yourself only once in the number of their hearers, and I defy you, though you have the best intentions

in the world, to hearken a quarter of an hour to them without being wearied, and without perceiving gradually, that your attention cools, is lost, and utterly gone ; which all proceeds from the preacher's speaking in general, and consequently to no one : And it is natural to be soon wearied with hearing a voice, which is nothing else but a voice, and a man, who while he is speaking says nothing to us. There is nothing more carefully to be avoided by the preacher, than the being tedious : Because nothing is more contrary to the end of his ministry ; he who tires his hearers being sure never to convert them.

The reason why some particular preachers have the gift of being never tedious to their hearers, and of quickening always their attention is, that they speak always to them, which is done in particular, determinate and practical propositions.

The preacher's end is to persuade effectually, that is to say, in such a manner as may engage me to action. But how should he arrive at this end, if his discourse does not continually impress such a motion on his hearer, as may divert him from evil, and spur him on towards good ? Now is he to be moved in this manner by general and speculative propositions ? No certainly ; these have in their own nature very little influence : The hearer is determined to act by the force only of practical propositions, and such as of themselves incline him to action.

He is very ignorant of the heart of man, who thinks to stir it by such weak machines, as those propositions which have nothing in them that can affect or move it. St. Chrysostom was very well acquainted with it, and he never is observed to be diffuse in speculative arguments, but keeps always to the practical method in his sermons : He never loses sight of his hearers, and never speaks but to them : Every thing likewise which he says, carries a persuasive force with it ; because every thing he says, interests his hearers.

Who ever felt himself excited to any one good work by these purely speculative discourses, that are of no other use, but to fatigue or amuse the audience? They are indeed improperly called discourses, they are rather the empty declamations of a rhetorician, who applauds himself, and provided he declaims, hugs himself and is inwardly very much delighted. It is to no purpose, says St. Austin, to have every thing you say please me, if every thing you say to me does not induce me to act.

Speculation is naturally dull, it must be therefore enlivened: To this end men have recourse to the artificial fire of an earnest pronounciation, they use violent gestures, raise their voices, send forth loud exclamations, which strike and stun the ear, and sometimes terrify the assembly, but never touch the heart. How improper is this ardour of pronounciation, when the things to be pronounced so vehemently are insipid.

To preach speculatively therefore, or practically is not an indifferent matter to the christian orator, speculation and the end of eloquence being incompatible. Accustom yourself to give a practical turn to every thing you shall say; let the very propositions into which your discourses are distributed be conceived always in such a manner, that they may directly tend to move the hearer to action. It is not possible but the discourse should be suitable to the nature of such propositions: These are as it were the seed out of which it grows; if they are practical your whole sermon will be so; if this quality be wanting in them, it is to be feared, that a tedious and empty speculation will run through the whole from the beginning to the end.

A christian orator is termed such, not particularly because he explains the truths of christianity: he will never deserve this name, unless he is able to represent them in a manner that leads and inclines men to action.

There is indeed matter sufficient in all the truths of christianity to move the hearer, and induce him to virtue, but it is your part to contrive things so, that they may actually move him, and actually induce him to virtue.

Have the end of your ministry continually in view, and I will engage, that you shall always preach very practically. Every proposition which shall not induce your hearer to advance towards piety, will never seem fit to merit a place in your discourse. A christian discourse should be nothing else but a series of truths suggested to us by religion, and proposed to the hearer as so many powerful motives to do well. This should be the particular business of eloquence, here is the glorious field, wherein it ought to triumph; and not to display a train of long insipid arguments, to please the ear with pompous periods, or to adorn and embellish some little descriptions.

Descriptions, to be agreeable with the rules of eloquence should be practical, that is to say, drawn in such a manner, as they may directly incline the hearer to avoid those vices, or embrace those virtues, whereof they are the descriptions. You will object and say, I discourse on some particular vice and shew the deformity of it, and is not this sufficient? Let the hearer do the rest, I mean, let him make the application of it to himself: Should he refuse to take this care upon himself to supply my omission? But to all this I answer, that if you reckon upon his doing so, you will be mistaken: The hearer will do nothing at all of it; he is attentive to what you have to say to him, not to what he might say to himself. Besides, suppose he is willing to give himself this trouble, there is a great deal of difference between the preacher's application to him and his own, the manner only of his preaching making the application much more affecting: The warmth, the action and motion with which he delivers himself, the tone of the voice, and

the different turns that he makes use of, all these touch, persuade and fix an impression : The preacher who leaves it to his hearers to apply what he says to them, transfers to them the most essential part of his business.

CHAP. XIII.

Panegyrics and Funeral Orations.

THE mysteries of our religion and panegyrics have been always thought to be the fatal rock, which the generality of preachers split upon : In the one we are apt too much to indulge our speculations, in the other our wit. Discourses of this nature are generally dull and heavy ; and many for fear of succeeding ill resolve never to speak at all of our mysteries, or to praise the saints ; which, in my opinion, is a mistake in them. It is not allowable to exclude either the mysteries or saints from the pulpit. The church which consecrates particular days for the celebration of our mysteries, and to honor the memory of the saints, designs likewise, that the preachers should explain the one to the people, and pay the others the respect which is due to them, by a recital of their virtues.

But to make a sermon on any mystery, it is not sufficient to clear, unfold it, and render it intelligible ; we should moreover, (which is the principal and essential point) represent such parts of it, as may leave an impression on the hearer, and induce him to fly from evil and do good. For whatever subject the

christian orator may treat on, this ought always to be his only aim, and if he proposes any other, he goes out of his way and loses himself.

When therefore you are to preach on any of our mysteries, examine deliberately, what are the certain and indisputable truths, that our religion sets forth in them: For I would have nothing delivered from the pulpit that looks like opinion and probability. When this is done, you may by the help of the secret and prevailing charms of christian eloquence turn these great truths of our faith into so many motives to good actions, and as such propose them to your hearers. By this means your sermons on our mysteries will be as persuasive, as affecting and as proper to convert men, as any you can make on moral truths; and at the same time, you will prevent that wearisomness and loathing of the hearer which almost always attends a bare exposition of things like these, purely speculative.

The end of a christian panegyric is not to praise the saint, who is the subject of it, nor to excite in the minds of those, who hear you, a great, but almost always fruitless idea of his merit and virtues; this is but the means, the end is that of every christian discourse, viz. Effectually to dispose the hearers to the practice of virtue, and to the forsaking of vice.

The manner of praising the saints should be proportioned to this end: If it be not so, the christian panegyric degenerates into a loathsome declamation. All the commendations, or to speak more properly all the actions of the saint, that the preacher represents (for actions are the matter of encomiums) should be so turned, as to engage the hearer to an imitation much rather than to an admiration of them: In this the preacher should exert all the power and skill of his art, and not conceive such thoughts as are more ingenious than solid, or describe the actions of the saint under glittering images, and so endeavour to pro-

cure to himself the admiration of his hearers, instead of turning it wholly towards the saint, whose encomium he is making.

The actions of the saints are often more to be admired than imitated: What then is the preacher to do? Is he to say nothing of them? His silence would in some sort rob them of their glory: these are the bright passages of their lives, whereby they strike us most powerfully, and create the greatest respect to their memory on earth. Of these I agree, he may make mention, but let him not insist on them; or if he do, let it be with a design only to discover something even in these inimitable actions, that may be imitated. The christian orator should endeavour much more to recommend what is imitable in the saints, than what is wonderful, for this great reason, that what is wonderful, conduces only to the glory of the saints, but that which is imitable to the salvation of the hearers. The saints are so far from taking it ill, that they require us to prefer the advantage of the audience to their own honor; they freely consent to have their encomiums less beautiful and pompous, provided they may be more beneficial and affecting; in a word, that we should admire them less and imitate them more.

Funeral orations properly speaking belong not in their own nature to the eloquence of the pulpit; these may be said to be adopted children: Flattery or at least complaisance to the great has introduced them into the sanctuary, custom has authorized them, and religion has at last consecrated them. I am not so hardy as to design by any thing I shall say, to deprive our preachers of so fine a theme, whereupon to display their eloquence, but I cannot forbear pitying every christian orator, who is obliged to enter these lists: He is in danger either of supporting his character very ill, or contributing very little to the glory of his hero. What difficulty soever there may be in

reconciling the two characters of a panegyrist, and a christian orator, we have notwithstanding very excellent models in this kind. What beauty of stile, what elegance, what florid expressions, what greatness, what majesty, what strength, what vehemence, and at the same time, what an air of christian sincerity and religion is to be met with in the funeral orations of F. B. R. &c. Every thing is easy to such eminent masters, who have made their names as immortal as those of the great men, whom they have so happily commended. Many use their utmost endeavours to imitate them, but the more they are imitated, the more the public discovers that they are inimitable. As often as I read them, I confess, I should be very sorry, if discourses of this kind were not allowed to be within the limits of christian eloquence.

But is it possible to mention the art of praising illustrious persons, that are dead without a very particular regard to that celebrated prelate, who has advanced this sort of eloquence to a higher point of perfection, than all our French orators before him could accomplish? To this great man I owe, I will not say an encomium; that it would not become me to undertake; but the declaration of the most sincere love and gratitude for the friendship with which he honoured me in his life time. What a treasure of merit did those discover in him, who had a near access to him? He was as amiable in conversation, as admirable in his discourses. Where have we seen all these qualities, such as sound sense, prudent conduct, exact probity, sincere piety, tender and compassionate charity, love of religion, zeal according to knowledge, clear and solid reason, moderation, self-command, evenness of humour, candour of soul, fidelity in the accomplishing all his duties, agreeableness, good-breeding, complaisance without affectation and meanness, where, I say. have we ever seen all these quali-

ties more happily united than in his person ? It was from the bottom of this heart, so richly furnished, that those touches proceeded of an immortal beauty, which he has distributed throughout his works. When we observed him with that shew of simplicity and modesty, affable to all the world, accessible to the lowest of mankind, without pride, without ostentation of greatness, without the least pleasing reflections on his own merit, as if the sight of it were veiled from him ; and when at the same time we considered, that this was he, who had borne away the applauses of all France, who, if he but opened his mouth, was sure to make himself admired, who had been able to describe the Turennes, as great as when they appeared at the head of armies, and were followed with victory : To represent the Telliers and Lamoignons with marks of such resemblance, that men believed they saw and heard justice itself pronouncing its oracles : To brighten and improve the portraitures of princesses and queens, &c. by the beauty of his expressions, and the elevation of his thoughts : What an impression must the idea of such illustrious merit, supported with so much simplicity and modesty, have made upon the hearts of all men ? Was it possible for them to forbear loving him as much as they admired and esteemed him.

To praise great men as they deserve, it is necessary that he who undertakes it, should himself be a great man. Give me a mind and heart capable of conceiving such thoughts and sentiments as are proportioned to the excellency of their merit, and I will run the risk of praising them. As none but heroes are praised in our pulpits, with all that pompous preparation which strikes the eyes of the public, I am not afraid to say, that the christian panegyrist should be himself a hero in the art of praising ; and that the hearer should find some difficulty to decide which is the most eminent in his kind, the hero whom

he hears commended, or the orator who commends him.

A funeral oration is a mixture of the sacred with the prophane. What ingenuity is necessary to reconcile one with the other? So that the sacred should never make us lose sight of the hero, whom we undertake to praise, and the prophane should never prevail so far as to obscure the christian orator.

The preacher who comprehends the difficulty of this, will not willingly take upon himself such works as these, and never will engage in them without an indispensable necessity. The sad fate of the generality of those funeral orations that we hear or read, should make us apprehensive of such an employment. It is a very difficult task to get up into the pulpit for no other end but to praise.

The difficulty of the success proceeds from the very nature of the work. A funeral oration is a discourse of a particular character; if it is not excellently good, it is bad; there is no medium: The moderately good which is otherwise supportable, nay commendable, is here not to be endured. The public must be pleased with the orator to a degree of rapture; if it be not, it has reason to be but little satisfied with him, nay, it has cause to blame him.

But why all this, it will be said, and whence comes this mighty delicacy of taste in this matter? The true reason is this: A funeral oration is designed only for the glory of the dead, and the pleasure of the living; this is its principal and almost only end. Now all works that are intended only for glory and pleasure, are esteemed bad, if they are not excellent. As they are neither very necessary, nor very beneficial to the public; if you would have them approved, order it so that what is wanting in the necessity and benefit, may be supplied by the beauty, excellency, and perfection of them. If this be not done, the public will despise and loath you.

It is according to this idea in the opinion of the most excellent masters, that in these discourses, wherein nothing else is aimed at but ostentation and pleasure, the orator should display all the charms and beauties of his art, all the most elevated sentiments, the most sublime thoughts, the utmost vivacity and purity of stile, all the grace of figures and magnificence of expressions, &c. It is not sufficient that the arms with which he combats, should be good, it is necessary that they should be glitteringly bright. That eloquence, says one of the most famous orators of antiquity, which does not procure admiration, deserves not the name of eloquence. What then will be the fate of a funeral oration, which does not merit admiration?

Poets say, they are not allowed to be moderately good : The reason is, because poetry is designed only for pleasure. What necessity is there of poets ? The world can do very well without them. Whoever has a mind to meddle with poetry, should excel in it ; if he does not, he is confounded in the crowd of bad poets.

It is not the same with preachers, it is allowable in them to be moderately good. A sermon is not a discourse made for pomp and ostentation ; we do not preach for the sake of pleasing, but because it is useful and necessary that there should be ministers of the gospel to publish the truths of christianity, to animate and affect the hearts of men, to dissuade them from vice, and engage them to the practice of virtue. All cannot be excellent ; nay, it is expedient that they should not be so : It is necessary there should be indifferent preachers, and some even bad ones. For it is requisite there should be men of different talents for the people of the best rank, and for the vulgar ; for the learned and the ignorant, for cities and villages. Be careful to avoid as you would a rock that threatens ruin, those turns and figures which our sacred orators,

who first distinguished themselves in this kind, have used with success. The first time they appeared, men were surprisingly struck with them, they admired and applauded them; the second time they were without the grace of novelty, and the world has since been surfeited with the frequent repetition of them: They are indeed fine flowers, but as they have passed from one hand to another, they have lost their beauty and are faded. Search into your own heart, and study the subject you are upon to the very bottom, by this means you will be furnished with plenty and variety of figures which always please, because they are always natural and new.

Many imagine that a funeral oration requires a different style from that of the pulpit. Upon this principal they determine with themselves to form one that is new; But what sort of one is it? A soft, weak and languishing style, a style too florid and polite, too smooth and even, too glittering and pompous. What is the consequence of this? The success does not answer, and they miscarry in their undertaking. There should be the pathetic, the sublime, and the marvellous in the funeral oration; and what other style is proper for all this, than that of the pulpit?

A preacher should never praise like a prophane orator, I mean for the sake of praising only: This is unbecoming the greatness of his character, and diverts him from the end which is essential to his function. For let him not imagine that he is divested of the august character of a preacher, because he has assumed that of a panegyrist. Let him shun, I do not say falsehood, disguise and flattery, but the very shadow of them: He should on all occasions preserve an inviolable affection to truth, which should appear even in those eulogies that are the most magnificent and soothing.

Let it be his particular care never to praise any thing but what is truly praise worthy in both the sight of God and man : Let him consult rather the instruction of his audience, than the glory of his hero ; Neither great employments, nor the most honourable posts, neither authority, politeness, learning, genius, courage, nor even heroism and loyalty, deserve commendations out of the mouth of a christian orator : He should reflect upon all this glitter of worldly greatness, without any other view than to discover its emptiness and vanity, and to inspire his hearers with the contempt of it : Or if he do say any thing to its advantage, it should be on the account only of the good use that is made of it.

If there have been any defects in your hero, that are known to all the world, it is then almost equally dangerous either to speak of them, or to conceal them : If you pass them over in silence, it is to be feared that this affected silence may be construed by your hearers as want of sincerity : If you speak of them, with what precaution, care, and prudence should it be done, that you may not displease the public, nor disoblige the persons interested, whose delicacy in this point is very sensible. They who would learn how a christian orator may disengage himself advantageously out of these slippery paths, need only read and regulate themselves by the funeral oration of that great prince Lewis of Bourbon, composed by father Bourdaloue : There they will see such master-pieces of art as are above rules and are reserved only for the most eminent masters of eloquence.

Here give me leave to renew my grief in the tenderest manner, for the loss which we sustained some years ago by the death of that incomparable minister of the gospel whom I have just now named. The pulpit will a long time feel it, and I know not when we shall have the consolation to see it repaired.

France has already done him the justice to esteem him the most celebrated preacher of his age, and will be eternally indebted to him for having advanced christian eloquence to that high point of perfection, which it has arrived at in our days. There scarce ever was a more universal, more glorious, or more settled reputation, and more above the reach of envy, than that which father Bourdaloue enjoyed for near forty years : The public was never divided on his account, both the city and the court equally admired and esteemed him. All the world was pleased to be of his audience ; they made a merit of it and thought they did themselves an honor, when they could say, we have heard him. The evangelist St. Luke seems to have painted this great man to the life in the encomium which he makes of an eminent preacher in the acts of the apostles : * An eloquent man, in whose person all the great marks of sound eloquence were united, simplicity with majesty, strength with sweetness, vehemence with unction, liberty with exactness, the most lively ardour with the purest light, instructed in the way of the Lord, and thus prepared, with what facility did he explain the most profound mysteries of religion ? In what a fine light did he set the truths of morality ? Nothing escaped the vivacity and the extent of his penetration. Fervent in spirit, how much fire appeared in his action without any undue violence and transport ? What a torrent and rapidity without confusion and disorder ? He bore down all resistance in the minds of those who heard him, and forcibly subdued them ; there was an inevitable necessity to be persuaded and convinced by him : Libertinism itself had not the courage to oppose him, and if it did not always yield to the strength of his discourses, they were at least respected by it : There was such a charm in hearing him, that even after he had persuaded and convinced you, it was to be wished

* Acts. xviii.

that task were still to be performed that still he were to convince and persuade you. Reason and religion in him were perfectly united ; the rational man and the christian appeared equally in his compositions ; for he displayed all the force of the purest and most enlightened reason, to the astonishment of the beholders, and at the same time set forth all that is most noble and sublime in religion, all that is most proper in it to subdue the most arrogant and haughty reason, and subject it to the obedience of an humble and sincere faith. Teaching diligently the things of the Lord. He never knew what it was to paint and disguise truth : From this he never varied, though what he said was always marvellous and new. With what a discreet and modest freedom, without any shadow of pride and presumption did he in the midst of public acclamations exhort, conjure and reprove ? Flattery never induced him either to open or close his lips : He was a friend to truth even were princes were concerned, and in the sincerity of his heart might have addressed himself to God in these words of the royal prophet, * I have spoken of thy testimonies before kings, and was not ashamed. In a word we may say of father Bourdaloue, without any aggravation, that he will be one of the most excellent models to posterity, of that good taste of evangelical eloquence, whereof I endeavour to give some idea in this work.

* Psa. cxix. 46.



CHAP. XIV.

Violent pronounciation contrary to the end of eloquence.

NOTHING is so contrary to the end which the christian orator proposes, as a passionate and violent pronounciation ; because it fatigues, overwhelms and stuns both the speaker and the hearer. How is it possible to persuade by this means ? It is not by dint of strong arms, of gestures and agitations that truth gets admittance into the hearer's mind, especially christian truth, which is of itself grave and majestic. Majesty and gravity which are always so becoming him who speaks on the part of God, do not suit with violence and transport.

Let your discourse come from you, not like a torrent that bears down all before it, but like a gentle shower that gradually sinks into the earth. Have a care how you confound strength and vehemence with violence and passion. Demosthenes was always eminent for the first of these qualities, the latter were always studiously avoided by him.

The preacher's actions should be always full of life and fire, without this there is no keeping up the attention of the hearer : But then the fire that quickens him, should be a still one. The tranquillity which is always thus sprightly and lively to me, seems the most beautiful, and at the same time the most difficult part of pronounciation, the attainment of it is a work of no inconsiderable labour. Few orators have the gift of preserving this tranquillity in conjunction with that fire which is necessary in pronounciation ; their imagination transports them ; they are no longer

masters of it ; it is a chariot drawn by unruly horses, a vessel driven by the winds, whence proceeds that noise, those violent strainings and distortions, and that multitude of ill composed gestures, which are too visible in many,

The general of an army never appears greater and more worthy of his command, than in the day of battle, when in the heat of an action, amidst the blood and slaughter of the field, he shews himself every where, giving his orders and encouraging all, yet at the same time loses nothing of that sedate air which none but true heroes can assume on such dangerous occasions. The same may be said of the christian orator, he never appears more an orator, than when amidst the greatest fire of his eloquence, and the thunder bolts, as I may say, that he hurls every where about him, he preserves I know not what air of tranquility, which shews, that he is not mastered by his subject, that all the powers of his soul are absolutely in subjection to him, and that he is raised as far above his hearers by the strength of his genius, as by the situation of the place from whence he speaks to them.

We have a model of this calm and yet lively pronounciation, in the person of that famous orator whose encomium is made by Cicero in his book of celebrated orators. When he was to harangue, every one was in expectation, and no sooner did he begin to speak, but it was easy to judge that he was worthy of that expectation : There was no great agitation of the body observable in him, he seldom stamped with his feet, and never changed his place. His discourse was earnest, sometimes warmed with passion and full of just indignation.

The more the discourse abounds with things noble and valuable, conceived in a lively and sprightly manner, the less vivacity and fire there should be in the preacher's action ; and that for these two reasons.

First, Because the great heat of pronounciation hinders the hearers from discerning the excellency and beauty of the things he lays before them. Secondly, Because, if to the great fire of the composition, you add a great warmth of pronounciation, out of these two fires united so together, there is formed a sort of combustion, which will be insupportable both to the eyes and minds of your hearers. They who have few good things to say, are the people generally that most bestir themselves; the more they want reasons, the more they abound in gestures. They imagine that the violence of their action gives weight to that which wants it, and value to that which is worth little; they make a noise and declaim, and this is all their merit. However in the pulpit we should discourse and not declaim: For eloquence is the art of saying good things, and speaking them agreeably. We see few preachers that speak, many that make a noise and declaim. For this reason the Roman orator complaining of his own times, said, *Latrant quidem oratores, non loquuntur*. It is no slight commendation of a preacher to say of him, this preacher speaks.

If the fire of pronounciation should be always gentle and always animated, it should not however be so always and equally. There are different degrees of tranquillity and fire. This variety which is so proper to prevent tediousness and keep up attention, must proceed originally from the heart, which should be the secret spring of the preacher's action. To this end your heart should be sensible of all you say, this should be always moved and deeply affected: In proportion as it is so, your action will be more or less lively, more or less sedate: The different sentiments which will succeed one another in your heart, according to the impressions which your subject naturally will produce there, will be represented in your eyes, in your countenance, and in your whole person, and will give you almost without your thinking of it, that

air of pronounciation which is agreeable with the true character of a christian orator.

A good pronounciation contributes a great deal to affect and convert men, which should convince some persons of their mistake, who to excuse themselves for neglecting to hear sermons, are wont to say, Have we not good books at home? And is not a good book as serviceable as a good preacher? Good books, it is true, were never so common as in the present age; and I confess, that the reading of them is a very beneficial means of salvation, that cannot be too much recommended, or too much put in practice: However, the reading of good books falls very short of being as effectual a means of salvation as the preaching of the word of God: For this divine word is as it were dead in good books; whereas in the preacher's mouth it is enlivened and animated. Every thing in the person of a minister of the gospel strikes you, his voice, his gesture, his action, his eyes, his silence, and the same truth which you will read without being affected, will touch you sensibly when preached and heard. We seldom see great sinners reclaimed but by the power of preaching: The words that have issued from the preacher's mouth like lightning, or a clap of thunder from a flaming cloud, are what have terrified, amazed and subdued them.

One of the finest wits that Italy ever produced, inviting one of his friends to come and hear a celebrated orator of his time, says to him, You will tell me perhaps, to excuse yourself from coming, that you read at home as eloquent compositions as any you can hear. I grant it: But these you may read always, when you please, you cannot always have the opportunity of hearing this ingenious man. Besides, you cannot be ignorant, that pronounciation makes very different and much deeper impressions than reading. What vivacity soever there may be in what you read, you cannot think, that it penetrates as far

as those strokes which the orator enforces home upon the mind by gesture, voice and every thing besides that belongs to declamation. Have you forgot what one of the most eminent orators of Greece said one day to the Rhodians, who heard an oration of Demosthenes's read to them, and could not sufficiently admire it? How much greater, said he, would your admiration have been, if you had heard this extraordinary man himself? From all which this consequence may be drawn, that it would contribute more to our salvation to hear a good preacher, than to read a good book; and likewise that it is more beneficial to read a good book than to hear a bad preacher.

I cannot too often repeat what I have said before, viz. That the source of all good pronounciation is in the heart. I have some where asserted, that an honest heart is necessary to our writing well, and I add that it is as necessary to our pronouncing well.

There are some preachers, all the warmth of whose pronounciation proceeds from an external cause. In their outward behaviour they seem as if they were all on fire, while there heart is all ice. This is an artificial fire kindled by the help of mechanism; and never fails to spread I know not what disagreeable air of declamation over the preacher's whole discourse, and the manner of his delivering it.

• Young persons, who would prepare themselves for the business of the pulpit, should study betimes how to rectify their hearts. If you would succeed this way, let me persuade you to cultivate your heart as carefully as your mind, and be assured that the ill disposition of the one makes at least as many bad preachers as the incapacity of the other.

An honest heart is indeed the gift of heaven, and they who are blessed with it, may rely upon its being a rich store of sound eloquence, if they know how to make the best use of it. But education, study, the

reading of good books, the conversation of well-bred persons, and reflection may perfect them, and polish the natural roughness of it.

Some have the talent of pronounciation, and are good actors, but they want that of invention, therefore are not allowed to set up for authors. What have these persons to do then? Must they conceal the excellency which they possess so eminently? St. Austin says, they would do well to learn by heart the eloquent discourses of the best masters, and deliver them to the people, with all the charms of pronounciation; by this means we should have more preachers of the truth than we have at present, at least we should not be every day exposed to the tediousness and vexation of hearing so many bad sermons. And let us not take upon ourselves to charge them with the guilt of plagiaries, provided this good quality of a fine pronounciation be accompanied with a good life, nor reprove them as the Lord did formerly certain prophets, who, as he complains, stole his word: For he who steals takes the goods belonging to another; now the word of God belongs properly to him who declares and practices it, not to him who preaches well and lives ill.

CHAP. XV.

Of the modesty of the christian orator.

• **N**OTHING conduces more to make the preacher amiable in the eyes of his hearers than an air of modesty in his whole person, especially when some little glimmerings of great merit are discovered through this veil of modesty; it is then with the christian orator as with a beautiful woman, the more modest she is the more she charms and pleases.

Whatever makes the preacher amiable, makes him persuasive too ; the reason whereof is, that when once we are masters of the heart, we may easily command the mind, this suffering itself to be carried along with the other. Pride, haughtiness and arrogance, nauseate and turn our stomachs against the persons who are infected by them, and render us unapt to receive any thing well from them. We naturally hate pride and men of insolence, and have very little inclination to be persuaded by one whom we do not love.

The christian orator should be always grave, majestic and noble, but notwithstanding this, he should be always modest. Majesty and greatness are not qualities irreconcilable with modesty. The august character of God's Ambaffador which he has the honour to be invested with, should inspire him with boldness, never with presumption or pride. There is a modesty of action, which is then visible, when no perplexity or confusion appears in your countenance, gestures, and motions. The irregular disorder of the body, if I may so venture to express myself, is a sad presage of the immodesty of the soul. There is a modesty of voice to be attained by avoiding carefully to give your voice a rough, domineering, insolent air, which conveys the disagreeableness, that strikes the ear to the very mind of the hearer. A soft and strong voice, even and diversified, commanding and modest, is a wonderful help to persuasion. The mind does not easily submit to those reasons which are offered to it in so unpleasing a way, as that of a harsh, haughty, violent, and angry voice.

There is likewise a modesty of language and expression, which consists, first in the constant forbearance of all strained and overdaring expressions. Secondly, In softening those expressions which of themselves are too rugged, imitating herein the ex-

ample of St. Chrysostom, who says, “* Shew a
 “ reverence, my brethren, to this holy table whereof
 “ we are all partakers : Let us tremble at the sight
 “ of the sacrificed Lamb, whose innocent flesh is here
 “ served up to us. The very robbers themselves and
 “ common thieves (pardon the comparison, and im-
 “ pute it to my concern for you) the very thieves I
 “ say, who eat together and sit down at the same
 “ table, after such a familiar communication, offer no
 “ acts of violence to one another. This union in
 “ some manner transforms them, and changes those
 “ who were before as cruel as tygers, into creatures
 “ as mild as lambs. And we who eat the same
 “ bread, the same flesh at the same table, &c.”

Thirdly, Modesty of expression consists in saying nothing that may ever be offensive to chaste ears. In St. Chrysostom's opinion, † we should imitate the prudence of St. Paul, who being obliged to say something of the abominable disorders to which the wisemen, falsely so called among the heathen, abandoned themselves, with great skill united two things which seem contradictory, by preserving always a becoming gravity and decency in his words, and yet making an impression on the reader's mind, by representing in a lively manner the detestable practices of these philosophers. When we would be tender of offending modesty on occasions of this nature, we are in danger of not sufficiently affecting the mind, and when we would touch the mind to the quick, we are in the like danger of offending modesty. But St. Paul has performed both with wonderful success, and the term which he uses is as it were a veil wherewithal to cover the monstrous vices that he speaks of.

Modesty should be remarkable in every thing you say. Never speak of yourself : The preacher who does so, speaks almost always very improperly. Never praise yourself, I do not say directly, for this is too

* Hom. 8. on the Ep. to the Rom. † Hom. 5. on the Ep. to the Rom

childish and insipid, and it is very uncommon to see an orator commend himself in this manner, but even indirectly. Whereby I mean, that you should never say any thing purely to advance your own glory, and to procure to yourself the esteem and applause of your hearers. I require much more of you, or rather modesty itself requires it; for that will by no means allow you to perceive, so at least as others may take notice that you perceive the fine things that may be said by you. Avoid the vain affectation of some particular preachers, who do all they can to make the audience observe that they are the first discoverers of the excellent and beautiful passages of their own discourses, who admire themselves, and seem by their smiling to beg the approbation and applause of those persons, who will be so complaisant as to give it them. This spreads an air of vanity all over the preacher, which spoils the very best things, and is an obstacle to persuasion.

The good effect which a modest preacher produces in the mind of his hearers is not to be expressed, who while he is saying the finest things in the world, delivers them in such a manner, as if he were in reality the only one in the assembly, who did not discern the beauty of them.

It will be said, does not St. Paul commend himself? It is true he does: But is his example in this point to be made a precedent? Give me a St. Paul, a chosen vessel appointed to proclaim the name of Jesus Christ before princes and all the nations of the earth, a man caught up into the third heaven, and I will give him leave to praise himself. St. Paul indeed does so: but how does he palliate and soften these commendations? He never praises himself, but when the cause of the gospel requires it from him, and the honor of his ministry, which some false apostles endeavoured to lessen; never without previously shewing, that he does

it with regret and reluctance, through necessity and by constraint; never without ingenuously confessing, that he is imprudent and indiscreet for doing so. When the greatness of his revelations is the matter in question, he assumes the character of a man devoted to the service of Jesus Christ, and highly favored by him: But when his own weaknesses are mentioned, he confesses himself to be that Paul, who in his own flesh felt the sting of Satan his persecutor. I can never be weary of reading the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth chapters of the second epistle to the corinthians; the more I read, the more I admire that zeal, which animated this great apostle, which enriched his mind with a great copiousness of figures, and inspired it with a thousand turns, that might be an advantage to the most sprightly and natural eloquence.

It is not sufficient that the preacher never does commend himself: St. Chrysostom would have him carry his modesty to such a degree of perfection, as not to be pleased with commendation: He thinks the greatness of his soul, and the character of his employment should raise him above popular applause, and his reason for this opinion is, lest the love of praise should remove him at a distance from, and make him absolutely lose sight of that, which should be the end of his ministry. There is indeed room to fear, that though he is able by the power of his eloquence to make his hearers good men, he would chuse rather to make them his own panegyrists, and so unhappily determine to prefer their applause to their conversion: For which reason this great man sets so high a value upon the preacher's contempt of commendation, as to rank it among those qualities, that most peculiarly belong to him, and to press it upon him, that he should use his best endeavours to confirm himself betimes, and to root himself so deeply in it, that the breath of vain-glory may never shake him.

We too often discern a kind of good understanding between the hearer and the preacher; the preacher repays the commendation, which the hearer bestows liberally upon him, with the pleasure, which he gives him; and the hearer for the pleasure he receives from the preacher makes a large return of commendations; and God will say one day to both of them, Verily you have your reward.

How can a preacher love praise and be fond of it, who is convinced by every day's experience how uncertain a proof it is of true merit? How many things do we hear cried up in preachers, which deserve to be condemned? And how many things are blamed in them, or overlooked, which deserve applause and esteem? Here the preacher charms and ravishes, there he is an object of pity; in some places the people croud after him, in others he is deserted: This proceeds sometimes from envy, sometimes from prejudice and ignorance. For one ingenious and intelligent hearer, there are a thousand of quite another turn, whence it inevitably follows according to the wise maxim of St. Chrysostom, that he who speaks with the greatest eloquence, is not always the person who is most applauded.

Not that you are to neglect the esteem and approbation of the public; on the contrary you should omit nothing to deserve it, and that for this important reason only, that it is absolutely necessary in order to the attaining your end: For a preacher whom the public has no esteem for, is a very improper instrument to convert men.

According to this principle,* in St. Austin's opinion, it is requisite that the public should see and be persuaded, that the preacher always exacts much less respect than men are willing to pay him: So that if he does not accept of all that is given him; he does not likewise intirely reject it, but reserves so much of

* Epist. 45. ad. Aurel.

it only, as is necessary for their interest, who pay him this respect, to whom he could not be serviceable, if he were not in some sort of esteem and reputation with them ; and assumes none of it to himself, having a regard to God only, and despising from the bottom of his heart all the censures and all the praises of men.

* Be governed by the wise maxim of St. Chrysostom ; do on your part all that becomes you to merit the commendation of the public ; when this is done, if it be favourable to you, reject not the praises, which it bestows on you, for the affectation of despising them, proceeds almost always from a secret pride ; if it be not favourable to you, do not long vainly for the praises, which are denied you, nor be at all uneasy at it. Endeavour to find that within yourself, which may comfort you, and be a support to you against the censure, or if you will, the unaccountable humour of mankind : Hence you will be supplied with abundant matter of fortitude and consolation, if your conscience attests on your behalf, that you have had no other design in the particular manner of eloquence you have chosen, but to glorify God and make your neighbour holy.

CHAP. XVI.

Of the respect which the christian orator should shew his hearers.

THE Christian orator, who is determined to omit nothing that may contribute to the attainment of his end, should appear always respectful to his hearers : Which respect should arise from this reflec-

* Lib. 6, de Sacred.

tion, viz. It is the public that hears me, and must declare either in my favor, or against me. So many persons as he sees before him, so many judges has he, who are to pronounce sentence on him: Now every one who is invested with the character of a judge deserves to be respected.

* We are wanting in that respect, which is due to an assembly, when we appear without any preparation in the pulpit, and without knowing almost, what we have to say. It is an argument that we think them not worth that application, which is necessary in the making a good sermon, and this neglect they may reasonably take for a proof of our contempt, which, without doubt is a very improper disposition for the persuading of an audience. For we find it very difficult to convince any single person, who is sensible, that we despise him.

Those bold adventurers in the business of the pulpit, who without any preparation embark rashly on the wide and dangerous ocean of christian eloquence, never fail of being shipwrecked in it. If the hearer thinks himself despised, he is very ready to return the contempt. Those preachers, who depend too much upon the quickness of their wit, and get up into the pulpit with the same indolence and indifference as they go to take a walk, have very mistaken notions of the greatness of their ministry, and know not what it is to discourse to a public congregation. The most diligent preparation seconded with the best genius, is scarce sufficient on these occasions.

There are two sorts of impudence, in the opinion of a great master, which are equally to be dreaded by every orator. The first consists in appearing publicly with a particular air of confidence and presumption, which immediately raises a suspicion, that the orator despises his audience, or that he is not sufficiently acquainted with the greatness and difficulty of his employment. The second consists in appearing

before a large assembly, without having any thing to say, that is worthy either of the subject which he treats of, or his character, or the attention of a multitude of good people, who are met together purposely to reap the benefit of his discourse. For the reproach of impudence is not to be avoided by seeming timorous or changing colour : We should still farther secure ourselves from it by forbearing to do that, the practice whereof is always unbecoming ; and nothing is more so in a preacher, than to have nothing at all to say that deserves hearing. They would be very much in the wrong who should pretend to justify and even authorize either their rashness or their idleness by that passage in the tenth chapter of St. Matthew's gospel, where our Saviour says to his disciples, " When they deliver you up, take no thought how or what you shall speak, for it is not you that speak, but the spirit of your father that speaketh in you ;" or by another of St. Luke in his twenty-first chapter, " Settle it therefore in your hearts not to mediate before, what ye shall answer. For I will give you a mouth and wisdom, which all your adversaries shall not be able to gain-say, nor resist." For besides that the ages are passed, wherein the Lord himself inspired the prophets, and the preachers of his gospel, Jesus Christ never intended by these words to forbid a prudent and reasonable, but only a too scrupulous and troublesome preparation of what we have to say. We know the spirit bloweth where and when it listeth, not when and where we please. It is therefore requisite in St. Austin's opinion which we have in his comment on those places of scripture, that seem to prohibit all preparation in the minister of God's word, it is requisite, that the preacher before he gets up into the pulpit, should pray, study, think, reflect and meditate ; but when once he is there, let him then be satisfied, that these words are addressed to him, Take no thought how or what ye shall speak ; for it

is not you that speak, but the spirit of your father that speaketh in you; this is literally verified, if all that you have prepared is borrowed from the principles of true religion, and the divine writings of the scripture.

* Consult the holy spirit before you speak to your hearers; learn from him by prayer by study of the sacred books, and by profound meditation on the truths of christianity, what you are to say: But defer not to consult him, till you are just upon the point of speaking: For you would be then in danger of being given up solely to your own spirit, or rather, of being equally abandoned by your own spirit, and the holy spirit too. Whoever delays the consideration of what he is to say to the hour and moment, wherein he is to say it, tempts the Lord, is in a fair way to run aground to harangue the public very meanly, and to become the ridicule of his audience.

* The wise man speaking of himself has left us a very different idea of the christian orator from that which these bold and inconsiderate ministers of the word conceive of it. The Lord, says he, * hath in the first place granted me to conceive as is meet for the things that are given me, and above all the gift of persuasion; for in his hand are both we and our words, because it is he that leadeth unto wisdom, and directeth the wise; consequently he is the great master of persuasion, which is one of the most finished pieces of wisdom. In the second place, God hath granted me to speak as I would the things which I have preconceived and imagined in my mind; that is, to express them in such terms, and under such figures and images as are to be desired in order to persuade men. Whenever therefore we get into the pulpit without any provision and preparation either of the matter or the manner of our discourses, we are so far from following the motions of the holy spirit, that we rather in some sort sin against it, he having taught us what is indis-

* Wisd. vii 15. 16.

penfibly required of us with refpect to the difficult and important miniftry of the word. Let every preacher therefore, who would accomplifh the end he aims at, continually have this excellent prayer in his mouth, "Inspire me, O Lord, with thoughts worthy of thee, and with a capacity to exprefs them according to my defires." Let him afterwards apply all the powers of his fou to conceive thefe noble thoughts and to exprefs them as nobly.

* St. Chryfoftom, who underftood the full importance and dignity of the evangelical miniftry, enjoins all preachers to labour very diligently in preparing the difcourfes which are to be publicly delivered by them; becaufe the conversion of many people depends upon their pains. Hereby you will be enabled to fay what is proper for the making an impreffion on them, which otherwife you would be never capable of doing. Our fermons are not attended to by perfons, who come like teachable and fubmiffive difciples, with a difpofition to receive every thing we fay with a blind deference and refpect, as the dictates of a mafter; but like indifferent and eafy fpectators, or as judges and fevere critics, more ready oftentimes to find fault than approve, and to censure than applaud. We fhould therefore enliven the indolence and remiffnefs of fome, and fentence the fecret malice of others. But tell me, I befeech you, how this can be done without the fucceffful and prevailing charms of a well prepared and well meditated difcourfe?

The generality of our hearers flock after us more in confideration of the pleafure they hope to receive than out of any concern for their falvation. They prefer the agreeable to the profitable, and make very little diftinction between the pulpit and the ftage. They expect the preachers fhould tickle their ears, divert their imagination, charm their minds, and pleafe their eyes; this, and fcarce any thing beides

* Lib. 5. de Sacred.

is what they require of them. But should preachers dishonourably betray their trust, and conform to so corrupt and depraved a taste? God forbid. Instead of being led away by the judgment of the multitude, they should prevail with the multitude to be of theirs by obliging them gradually, and almost against their inclination, to prefer that which is affecting and instructive to that which only pleases, delights and charms. But how much address, insinuation, strength, sublimity and elevation in the discourse does an attempt of this nature require? And at the same time what profound meditation, and constant preparations in the preachers, who pretend to have a power over the multitude so much to its advantage, and prevail with it to change its sentiments and ideas as they think fit.

Do not flatter yourself with a belief, that you are excused from the uneasy task of composing, under a specious pretence, that heaven has endowed you with a ready and happy wit. For whatever your genius may be, if it be not assisted by labour, it is to be feared, you will never get beyond the middle way of writing; though, otherwise you might have been capable of rising to the sublime. An opinion of your genius should by no means justify your negligence and idleness, but rather be a powerful motive to an industrious application. It is a soil, which will produce an hundred fold, if it be well cultivated. How will it then promote the honour of God and the advantage of your hearers? Be cautious therefore how you expose yourself to the regret of hearing it said one day by our Lord, "Thou slothful servant give an account of the talent that I left with thee." But if you want both genius and application too, what kind of part must you perform in the pulpit? Whatever genius Demosthenes had for eloquence, he was always an elaborate composer; and when his friend one day

laughed at him for taking so much pains in preparing his harangues, and learning them by heart, his answer was, I should be ashamed to appear before so great a people unprepared, and without having any thing else to say to them, but what should just then come into my mind.

If you are to get a name in the world, how much pains is necessary to succeed in such a design? Or if it be already established how much more is necessary to preserve it? When preachers have arrived to such a particular point of reputation, it is by no means allowable for them to be indifferent: The public, in St. Chrysostom's opinion, expects nothing from them then, but what is noble, sublime, and marvellous to a very high degree, and if their expectation be not answered, they begin soon to loath and despise them.

It is not uncommon to find preachers, who come near the character of the orator, mentioned by Cicero. As they are men of more application than genius, they by degrees grow weary of the trouble of composing, and are discouraged by the continual pains, which they find necessary to perform so difficult a part of their ministerial function with any honour.— Besides whether it proceed from humour, dislike or secret pride, so it is, that the fond extravagancies of men, which in this employment are inevitably to be endured and digested, become insupportable to them: The consequence whereof is, that in proportion as their application abates, their reputation diminishes, and they have very soon the mortification to observe, that all the glory they had acquired in their youth is obscured and eclipsed.

Having declared that a preacher, who would excel in his profession, should prepare his discourses with the utmost care and application, he is capable of, I add, that he should prepare them in such a manner, as they may seem in the judgment of the public to be

composed without any pains or preparation, an infinite deal whereof is, however, necessary to give them this appearance: For every thing in them should be easy, smooth and natural, without any shew of study. The art which is made use of must be so well concealed, that we may imagine all the preacher says to be entirely without any, his words and expressions to come naturally into his mouth, while he is pronouncing them, that the emotions of his heart have their rise the very moment while he is discovering them to his hearers. Thus the great skill and labour of the orator consists in delivering every thing, he has to say, with art, but so dexterously covered, that every thing he says may seem absolutely without any.

It is a fundamental maxim in the profession of eloquence, that the perfection of art consists in the concealment of it; for it is all lost as soon as it appears; when there is too much of it in a discourse, and it is too easily perceivable, that discourse ceases to be eloquent, and is no longer proper to persuade; because art, when it is too obvious to the hearer's understanding, makes him diffident, and destroys insensibly the good opinion he had conceived of the orator's integrity. He believes, at least suspects, that the orator does not declare the real sentiments of his heart, that he uses dissimulation and craft, that he endeavours to ensnare him, that he has some interest in deceiving him, and disguising the truth. And how think you, can the hearer have any inclination to be persuaded by him, when his mind is prejudiced with such an opinion?

Whatever the orator says, should, in Aristotle's judgment, be said in such a manner, that the art wherewith it is worked up may by no means be discovered, and that, far from appearing premeditated, it should look as if it were the effect of chance, and

produced extempore, as the pure work of nature : The one persuades, the other is an obstacle to persuasion, because the hearer who perceives it, is upon his guard, and is as suspicious of a discourse that shews itself to be elaborately composed, as we generally are of adulterated wine. There may be said likewise to be as much difference between the one and the other, as is observed to be between the voice of Theodorus the excellent comedian, and that of the other actors of his company ; his, is so natural, and so apt to impose upon the hearer, that one would say, it was not the player who spoke, but the very person, whose action is represented ; theirs seems forced and counterfeited. The best means of covering the artificial contrivance of a discourse, is to chuse such words, as are most ordinary in common use ; after the example of Euripides, who first found out this secret and discovered it to others.

One of the most celebrated orators of Rome, according to Cicero's relation, distinguished himself wonderfully in the art of concealing ingeniously all the artifice of eloquence. His memory was so happy, his action so easy, his words and thoughts so natural and so proper, that to hear him, he seemed as if he both spoke and thought without having in the least troubled himself before with the care of meditating, and preparing his subject. Yet he was always so well provided, when he was to make his public harangues, that the judges themselves sometimes were not sufficiently upon their guard to resist the prevailing charms of his discourse.

The ancient masters of eloquence, who perfectly understood the greatness of their employment, have given it as their opinion, that the respect which the orator is to pay the public should shew itself in fear and trembling : And there is reason certainly to tremble, when we make this reflection, viz. I am now to give an account of all my sentiments, thoughts and

expressions to the public. Every preacher may say with § St. Paul, "We are a spectacle to the world, to angels, and to men," than which there are few considerations more proper to damp and intimidate them. This respect tempered with fear and modesty, which is what every understanding and prudent orator should have always for the public, is a kind of judicious and severe censor, every thing that it either approves or blames, is generally either approved or blamed with reason. To consider and be continually representing to ourselves, that we are to appear before a numerous assembly, and entertain it for whole hours, that we are to look about us, be moved, grow pale and tremble ; all this wonderfully contributes to the correcting and perfecting a discourse ; because these ideas increase the attention and application of the orator's mind, make him take particular care of every thing, examine all his thoughts, words and even syllables ; the efficacious impression, which this idea, The public must be my judge, leaves upon his mind, is the reason, that he is the first always to pass the most exact and rigorous criticism on himself. But why is the judgment of the public so terrible, and so much to be regarded ? For very often it is made up of a multitude of persons, the generality of whom are either ignorant or of a mean capacity. I grant it ; But the universal opinion and judgment of this multitude of persons, who singly have but an indifferent taste, may be more considerable as it is the united sentiment of the whole body, whose judgment for this reason is requisitely perfect, and consequently sure and infallible ; and it is this universal opinion which the orator cannot too much respect or apprehend.

The difference which you are obliged to pay your

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§ 1 Cor. iv. 9.

hearer, requires of you likewise, that you should admit nothing in your discourse which may be reasonably offensive to him, and make him uneasy. In this particular you cannot be too tender, nor observe all this caution without a great share of moderation, good sense and discretion. One of our most excellent masters was not able to define eloquence in more proper terms, than by saying, that it is wisdom expressing itself with great copiousness. I know no better commendation that can be given a man who speaks publicly, than to say of him, that he never lets fall the least thing which may make any one uneasy ; that we run no hazards in hearing him, and that every part of his discourse is seasoned and accompanied with wisdom.

St. Austin esteems discretion in a christian orator at so high a rate, as to assure us, that it is a more valuable talent to say things wisely than eloquently :— Though to speak truth, and keep it to the definition of eloquence, as I have given it, we never speak eloquently without speaking wisely. We cannot, says this father, speak either more wisely or more eloquently, than our sacred orators have spoken ; because you no sooner comprehend what they say, than you comprehend too that they ought not to have said it otherwise : And I leave you to judge how much wisdom is necessary to say every thing constantly as we ought to say it. When therefore, every thing being first well weighed, all the circumstances of time and place, of the person you represent, the persons you speak to, and the matter which you treat of ; when, I say, after an examination of all these circumstances, it may be said of you without flattery, This preacher should not have delivered himself in any other manner than that he has followed, be assured that you have then spoken very eloquently, and consequently very wisely.

We hear it said very frequently as men return from our sermons, the preacher should not have said such a thing, or not in such a way. If the hearer's censure is founded on good reason, you may conclude from it, that in this place particularly, the preacher was not truly eloquent; because he has not spoken wisely, and has been wanting in those decencies which his employment indispensably exacts from him.

CHAP. XVII.

Of the decencies to be observed in preaching.

BUT it will be said, What are these decencies of the pulpit, without which there can be no true eloquence? They are, according to the best definition I can give of them, nothing else but that which is becoming a christian orator, whether you consider the character he represents, or the particular and only end which he ought to have in view. As for his character, it is that of the ambassador of Jesus Christ; and for the end which he proposes, it is the conversion and salvation of his neighbour. These two points, which he is never to lose sight of, should be his rule whereby to make a certain judgment of what is well or ill becoming the christian orator, of the decencies or indecencies of the pulpit. This article is of the greatest importance, and deserves to be handled more minutely.

In the first place then, I say, that there is a suitability of the subject and matter of the discourse.—All sorts of subjects do not fit a christian orator, not all even of those subjects which relate to good manners

and religion. For some are so low and trivial, that the preacher ought not to insist on them : The choice of these, amidst so many others of a nobler kind, that religion lays before him, is an argument of his want of taste and judgment. When we speak on the part of God, we should always have things of moment to say, and to utter any thing mean at such a time, is very unbecoming. Some matters should be treated of occasionally and in a cursory way : As for example, luxury in dress, plays, gaming, &c. an entire discourse composed purposely on such subjects, is not at all fitting ; because they do not seem proportionable to the majesty of the pulpit ; at least we may say, that it is peculiar to great masters of the art, to handle subjects of this nature with all decency and dignity that is requisite in the pulpit, Would you engage a woman of the world to relinquish her excesses, plays, &c. represent to her in a lively manner, some important truth of religion, engrave it deeply on her mind, and she will no longer be fond of the stage, and soon lay aside the vanity of her ornaments. There are some subjects which, though they abound with moral instructions, yet seem to be taken from the academies at Rome, or the portico of Athens ; the morality of them is too abstracted and refined, and therefore unfit to make any impression. When we hear a preacher proposing subjects of this kind to his audience, we say within ourselves, What does he mean by talking to us on this matter ? Are there no other subjects for him to make choice of ? The meaning of this reflection is, that the preacher has not fixed upon a subject fitting either for his hearers or himself, and in the very beginning of his discourse offends against the decencies of the pulpit. Lastly, there are some subjects which concern no one, at least not sufficiently. It is necessary that all they who hear you, or however the greatest part of them, should be interested in what you

preach to them ; for if they are not, what have they to do at your sermon ? what advantage will they reap from it ? In their hearts they cry, tell us something that is proper for us to hear ; whereby it is easily discernable, that the great truths of religion are always the fittest subject for christian eloquence ; because they suit every man, and most nearly concern us all.

There is in the next place, a suitableness of the proofs, which if you would observe, take notice of these two things : First, never to lay any stress upon a proof which your subject does not of itself administer ; because every that does not belong to it, and is far fetched, does not suit with it, and for that reason is not becoming. An orator who goes beyond his subject for his argument, is like a woman, who not satisfied with the natural beauties which heaven has bestowed, borrows those from art which do not become her, and are so far from improving her natural charms, that they disfigure them.

The second thing to be observed is, never to make use of any proofs that are not level with the capacity of your hearers ; for if they are above their understanding, and beyond the sphere of their conception, they are not suitable and becoming. Whence it happens but too frequently, that we reason in the pulpit after the finest manner in the world, and while we do so, are all the while grossly deficient in the decencies and decorum that are peculiar to that place.

Thirdly, There is a fitness of time, place and persons. What is proper for a village is not so for a city ; and what is proper for the city, is not so always for the court : The difference of places makes a great difference among the persons who hear us : Here they are of quality, men of the world, of good understanding and learning, and polished by education ; there they are the people only that compose our audience. If you harangue both alike, it is exi-

dent you will say many things that will not become you. Decency requires that you should adapt your discourses to the places where you pronounce them, and the persons whom you speak to. The difference of times makes another difference in these decencies. All subjects are not proper at all times ; some are peculiarly fitted for certain days and seasons, to which decency obliges us indispensably to accommodate ourselves. He who on Monday in Easter-week should preach upon fasting, would turn the whole audience against him : The sermon may be as fine as you please, that is nothing ; this was not a time, it will be said, to preach on a matter of this nature. One of my acquaintance on Ash-wednesday preached upon grace, which made so ill an impression upon the mind of his hearers, that they could not efface it during the whole lent. Nothing is so much to be apprehended as an ill setting out : The orator should be so wise as never to frustrate the expectation of the public ; if he does, he never can succeed well, but will certainly lose all the fruit of his discourse, how excellent and affecting soever it may be. The idea which the hearer has always fresh in his mind, viz. This man preaches what is not proper for him to preach, is an invincible bar to all persuasion.

I consider in myself, said the Roman Orator, what kind of orator I could approve, and I find, that I esteem him preferably to all others, who discerns constantly what best becomes him. For the prudence of an eloquent man should be remarkable in this above all things : but this cannot be, unless he is diligent in a careful observation of times and persons. For I am not of opinion that we should speak always in the same manner to all, or against all men. He therefore that can adapt his discourse to every thing that in decency is required of him, deserves the reputation of a man truly eloquent. An exact regard to decencies in the conversation of the world,

makes a perfectly well-bred person ; and an exact regard to decencies in a discourse makes a perfect orator. That which at particular times and before particular persons is said very eloquently, in other junctures it is not so : whence it follows, that to know all the beauties of a discourse, and to perceive how eloquent it is, we must be necessarily informed of all the circumstances with which it was pronounced : for want of this knowledge, how many beauties are quite lost to us, that are scattered up and down in the discourses of the most excellent orators.

Fourthly, There is a decency of action. The christian orator should be an actor, but in a way very different from the declaimer or comedian. That kind of action which is very becoming in these, would be extremely otherwise in him. The stage will ever be a very improper school to form the action of a preacher, and a man must be without the very first notions of the pulpit, if he would make the action of one, who is a player in the opera, or in a comedy, the rule of his action, who is a minister of the gospel. What an impression would it make upon the minds of his hearers, if while they saw and were attentive to him, they imagined that they were seeing and hearing B———— upon the stage.— Would this, do you think, be a very favourable disposition for the moving and converting them ? The action of a man who speaks on the part of God, should be noble and majestic, otherwise how will he support the dignity of that character which he represents : such a disproportion between his action and his character, is a very offensive indecency. His action should be warm and sprightly, because the things which he is to speak of being great, terrible, and amazing, decency requires that he should appear to be touched, and deeply affected with them himself ; otherwise men might say of him what

Cicero said of an orator whose action agreed very ill with the matter of his discourse, "If what you say were true, would you speak of it as you do?" Let him however, be cautious how he shews such vehemencies and extravagancies as are without rule or measure: these are no way becoming the grandour of his ministry. Let him carefully avoid a too starched and formal gesture; for besides that, there is affectation in it, and that all affectations sets ill upon him, it makes the hearer think that the preacher is more taken up with a desire of pleasing the eye, than of moving the heart; than which nothing is more unbecoming a man, the design of whose preaching should be only the conversion of his audience. Another particular to be observed in his gesture is, that it should not be too circumstantial, so as to describe by it every thing he says: this is acting the comedian, which is very unsuitable to the majesty of an ambassador of Jesus Christ. Remember that you are performing the part of a sacred orator, whose business it is to speak and pronounce clearly; not that of a prophane actor, whose part it is to imitate and represent things and persons. Be sure therefore that while you assume all the graces and beauties of a good actor, that you do not forfeit with your hearers all the authority of a good man, and lay aside the gravity which is so agreeable with your character. A small voice to me seems unbecoming the christian orator, not only because he runs the risk of not being heard, but likewise because there is no proportion between a small voice and the great things he has to say. For with this weak assistance how impossible will it be for him to keep up to the dignity of those truths which are to be explained by him? Or if he should attempt it, what would be the effect of his impotent endeavours? The prophets when they received their mission from God, were commanded †

† *Isa.* lviii. 1.

"To lift up their voices like trumpets," in order to proclaim the sins of the people, and oppose them : to what a great variety of decencies, if we run particularly through all of them, does the very action only of the preacher oblige him ? for there is action in his face, his eyes, in all the motions of his person, and in his very silence, which it is of infinite consequence to observe in obedience to this great maxim, that nothing can please but what is becoming.

A preacher therefore cannot too much reflect upon every thing, that, with respect to his action, may be well or ill becoming ; the least indecency in this point, immediately gives offence, because it strikes the eyes. But it must be confessed, that this most excellent perfection, which consists in saying and doing always what is decent in a proper manner, is not to be attained by art only ; nature has a great, if not the better share in it. It is no consequence at all, that a thing which is becoming in one should be so in another. That which may be done by you according to the rules of art, will sometimes be very improper in you, while that which another does against all rules shall become him perfectly well ; this is the secret and unaccountable reason, why every thing, even the defects of some are pleasing, and that the very virtues of others are ungraceful.

Cicero describing the action of one of the most celebrated Roman Orators says, his gesture did not express his words, but suited more his sentiments and thoughts. His voice was strong and lasting, but naturally hoarse ; yet this imperfection was so far from being disagreeable in him, that he improved it to his advantage ; for it made his action more moving and persuasive.

We may see what idea Demosthenes had of the necessity and efficacy of a good pronounciation in order to accomplish the designs of eloquence. When

we read that he was unmindful of nothing which was necessary to make him perfect in it, that he even studied how to regulate his whole action before a looking-glass ; this precaution may be of use, but it is not sufficient. The looking-glass is indeed a skilful painter, but it is mute, it represents things without saying a word. You may think that a gesture, motion or posture of the body becomes you, and be mistaken. How many persons consult every day their looking-glass about the ornaments of their dress, which, if it could speak, would say a great deal to them. A sincere and understanding friend, who observes you while you pronounce your discourse, and besides is careful in collecting the several opinions of the public, and then communicates them to you, is of much greater service to you than the truest mirror.

Fifthly, There is a decency of age, that which becomes a preacher when he is young, is not always so when he is in a more advanced age. A glittering, florid and embellished style, a great deal of politeness in a discourse, with thoughts that are more agreeable than solid, expressions more magnificent than useful or necessary, a certain copiousness and rapidity of words with I know not what fire and vivacity of imagination, are all tolerable, nay, pleasing in a young preacher ; but a more mature age requires graver ornaments and more severe beauties. If you are wise, lay aside these juvenile beauties as early as you can, at least be sure to do so then when you perceive yourself begin to be more in years. Unless you take this precaution, you must determine to undergo the uneasiness of seeing your reputation diminish in proportion as you grow more in age, and to find yourself despised when old, though you were esteemed and admired when young. Remember the fate of the celebrated Roman Orator : Perhaps no orator was ever more wonderfully applauded in his youth, but when he was loaded with years and honours, at

a time when the public had a right to expect something more majestic and grave from him, his performances were not received with equal admiration. He was still the same Hortensius ; the beauties of his style and thoughts, and the charms of his discourses were still the same ; but these no longer became him.

It is difficult, you will say, to change our style, and I confess, when the mind has taken a particular turn and manner of expressing what it thinks, it costs some pains to alter it and assume another. For this reason I advise a preacher, how young soever he may be, when he begins the study of christian eloquence, to form a style that may suit all times and ages.— If he is so happy as to do this, he will never be under the uneasy necessity of changing it, and will have no other care upon him, but that of perfecting himself in it. Now the style which is proper for all times and ages is the same with that which is suitable to the true character of a Minister of the Gospel, who has always things very important and noble to deliver on the part of God. What this style is you will see presently. For,

In the sixth place, there is a decency of style. Style is a certain manner of conceiving things and representing them by words, after that we have conceived them. Decency of style therefore consists in thinking and expressing ourselves in a manner suitable to the person who speaks, and to the things of which he speaks. Upon this principle we may determine certainly what sort of style is fitting for a christian orator. Shall we say it is the glittering and florid style ? God forbid. For does it become, do you think, an ambassador of Jesus Christ, who is charged with the conversion of the world, to amuse himself with giving a lustre to words, and with strowing flowers ? Is a sinner to be inspired with the dread

of God's Judgments, by scattering, if I may say so, lillies and roses in his way? Is not this rather effected by heaping coals of fire on his head, according to St. Paul's expression? Is it with a florid style, that men describe the torments of hell, and the horrors of a death in sin? Is it with dazzling words that we are terrified? that our obdurate hearts are broken, and that tears of compunction are extorted from us? What a disproportion is there between this kind of style and all these several ends so peculiar to the preacher? And consequently what an indecency is it too? I affirm therefore without hesitating upon it, that the sublime style is the only one proper for the christian orator, because it is the only one which is suitable to the majesty of that character which he is to maintain, to the importance of the affairs he is to handle, and to the excellency of the end which he should propose to himself. Consult the prophets who will for ever be the most perfect model of that style which the evangelical preachers should endeavour to attain; though the genius of each differs, yet they all agree in being sublime; because they were to speak from God, were to declare great and wonderful events, and intended all of them, to terrify, alarm and convert: And what other style than the sublime could be fitting for such a design? Learn therefore in the school of these inspired men, what the true style is, which is proper for you to use, and as every thought presents itself to your mind, as every word is described by your hand upon the paper ask yourself this question, Is this becoming my character? For says St. Austin, when what is said is unsuitable to the person who speaks, there is an end of eloquence. But how comes it about, that it is so utterly lost by any failure of the orator in decencies.— This very clear reason may be given for it, viz. that it evidently shews a want of understanding and good sense; and it is no less evident, that whatever is said

at the expence of understanding and good sense, can never be said eloquently. Wisdom therefore is the principle, and foundation of all true and sound eloquence; this should preside absolutely over all your thoughts, regulate all your sentiments, and guide your pen: So that it may seem to those that hear you, as if they beheld wisdom itself coming forth out of your heart, as from the place of its proper habitation, seat itself upon your lips, and express itself by your mouth; and eloquence at the same time as an inseparable companion associating with it, without almost any invitation from wisdom to put itself into its retinue. And is not this the very thing which we admire in the prophets? The spirit, that animates them, prompts them always to speak wisely and eloquently; not that the wisdom, with which they are plentifully endowed, is busied with the care of speaking eloquently, but that eloquence constantly follows and never forsakes wisdom.

There is a particular sort of eloquence, which becomes men of an extraordinary character, who have something divine in them; and this is that which the prophets make use of, or rather which the Lord has inspired them with. It becomes them so well, that any other would agree very ill with them, neither would it at all suit with any other persons, than such, as like them, are appointed to speak on the part of God, and to declare his adorable will to men.

To this decency of style should be referred the decency of terms and expressions, of turns and figures, of ornaments, descriptions, manners and human passions, &c. We will not insist at large on all these decencies: This would be to undertake what we have already performed; for by all that we have said in treating on these matters, it will be easy for you to discover what well or ill becomes the preacher: You will be able to discern, that this whole work is

one continued texture of reflections and maxims upon the decencies of the pulpit: There every thing is transacted with a regard to the end of our evangelical ministry: Nothing is approved by us, but what bears a proportion to this end, every thing is censured which does not tend to it, or removes us at a distance from it. All things that are proper to conduct you to your end will perpetually become you well. All things that are proper to divert you from it, will be perpetually mis-becoming..

With what scrupulous exactness therefore should you observe this almost infinite detail of decencies, which compose all the force and beauty of eloquence, whether sacred or prophane? For herein consists the secret charm discernable throughout the whole discourse, which lays fast hold upon the soul, and subdues the most rebellious wills. This is what forms that admirable relation of all the parts to one another, which has a bewitching power. Every thing pleases, because every thing is becoming; every thing persuades, because every thing is suited well and properly. But what an extent of reason and wisdom is necessary, never to say or do any thing, but what is becoming? What a profound knowledge of the heart of man? What a perfect acquaintance with the manners and language of the world? What a rectitude and sensibility of heart? What a good taste and judgment in all things? What penetration and diligent application to every thing? For, in the opinion of the greatest masters, nothing is so difficult in the art of speaking well, as to distinguish what is becoming. They agree likewise, that the constant and accurate observation of the decencies of eloquence is the perfection of this art.

By what kind of fatality then, or rather, by what disorder in the mind of man, does it come to pass, that some particular preachers, who are unacquainted with the first elements of their function, should form

so strange an idea, as we see they do, of the pulpit ? They look upon it as a stage, upon which reason and good sense are not allowed to appear, where they think they have a privilege to be extravagant with impunity, and without being so much as liable to the reproaches of any one. They imagine that when they speak in public, they ought never to say any thing, which is naturally obvious to the common sense of all the world, though this be the very thing they should say. They are persuaded, that they are obliged by the duty of their ministry to keep always at a distance from good sense, to have no manner of commerce with it, and to bid adieu to it constantly before they get up into the pulpit : This likewise is a law inviolably observed by them in the composition of their discourses ; it is the star that lights and directs them. They reject every thing that is offered to them by good sense, and have no concern at all to get into the road, that it points out to them. They are never so well pleased as when they are running in unbeaten ways, and roads unknown to them ; and flatter themselves with a belief, that they never were more eloquent, then when they have said such things, as common sense never could. They are transported with a violent and immoderate desire of saying something extraordinary without perceiving that this is almost always something very extravagant. Hence it proceeds, that it is more uncommon than we imagine to see a man in the pulpit, whom reason and good sense have not forsaken. Yet there is no such thing as being eloquent, unless prudence, reason and good sense prevail there. For by being eloquent we mean, the saying things proper to persuade, and can this be, without expressing them always wisely, sensibly and rationally ? Is not persuasion the great and difficult work of human reason ? And are rational beings to be otherwise persuaded than by reason ?—Consider therefore betimes this fundamental truth,

that every thing which is contrary to prudence, reason and good sense, is opposite to eloquence, and that it is impossible to be eloquent, without being wise and reasonable : No one, says the Roman Orator, can speak well, who does not think wisely ; and the applying ourselves to the study of true eloquence is the same thing with applying ourselves to the study of prudence. What an injury the refore do these preachers to the evangelical ministry, who may be said to get into the pulpit, only, to declare war against good sense ? They bring their function into disrepute by creating insensibly this mistaken prejudice in the minds of their hearers, viz. That the eloquence of the pulpit consists only in the conceptions of an imprudent mind, and in the fallies of an ill governed imagination : What an injury do they likewise to the word of God ? Certainly they prophane it. For is it not a prophanation not to preach the word with wisdom, which wisdom itself hath dictated ? Nor is it any excuse to say, that what we publish to the people is above reason. For how elevated soever the truths of christianity may be above human wisdom and reason, this does not exempt the preacher from speaking of them always reasonably and wisely. He is very much concerned, if his memory at any time fails him ; why is he not as much so when good sense is wanting ? Is it because the absence of good sense is not so dishonourable and reproachful a defect, as the weakness of his memory ? Whereas indeed it is without comparison much more so ? What then is the reason that we are so sensibly touched with the one, and so little disturbed with the other ? Can it be because the defects of memory are obvious to all the world ? There is no one person in the most numerous assembly, that does not perceive them, and the preacher is himself the first, who becomes sensible of them : But the defects of good sense do not make such a quick impression. These

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are a sort of eclipses much less remarkable ; there are only some particular persons that take notice of them ; they are unobserved by the generality, and by the preacher more than by any other. Can it be because the public is accustomed to the defects of good sense, and is not so to the defects of memory ? For where there is one whose memory betrays him, there are numbers who are deserted by good sense ? Whether this be the reason or not, so far we are sure, that if we make a right estimate of things, it is better to have our memory fail us an hundred times, than our judgment once : The preacher who wants the one is to be pitied, but he who wants the other is always to be blamed.

CHAP. XVIII.

Of the Christian Orator's Consideration of his Hearers, and the measures he is to observe with them.

AS soon as you perceive or even suspect, that any particular of what you have to say, may be offensive to the hearer, create a dislike in him, or affect his reputation, tho' it were the finest thing imaginable, bury it immediately in profound silence. There are some people who had rather lose a friend than a witty saying. But can any preacher consent to forfeit all the good graces of his hearers, and at the same time all the confidence too that they should have in him, rather than determine with himself to lose an expression, or a thought ? what else can be said of a preacher, who is of this character, but that his hearers are not very dear to him, not their salvation, what he has much at heart ?

When I affirm, that the Christian orator should advance nothing, which may make the hearer uneasy, I mean, that may do so reasonably ; for if it be owing to the evil disposition of his mind or heart, that what you say is displeasing to him, persist however in saying it, as becomes a zealous preacher, and one who is faithful to the duty of his ministry ; after the example of St. Chrysostom, who expresses himself in these terms to his audience. “ I know there are
 “ some among you, to whom it is no pleasure to
 “ hear me, and who cannot endure that I should
 “ speak to them so often on the contempt of riches :
 “ but what advantage would you reap from my silence? will this, suppose I should cease to admonish
 “ you of your duty, will this deliver you from hell ?
 “ on the contrary, would not your disquiet be increased by the liberty of repeating your vices without controul? and should I not by this mean silence
 “ be involved with you in the same condemnation?
 “ of what service then would my mistaken and cruel complaisance be to you ? Since it would produce
 “ nothing beneficial to you, and would rather be an aggravation of your misfortune ? What profit
 “ could it be to you, if while I flatter you with
 “ words that are agreeable to you, I in reality plunge
 “ you into eternal sorrow ? If I am more tender of
 “ offending your ears, than of wounding your souls,
 “ and to gratify the one, should let the other perish
 “ everlastingly ? Is it not much more eligible,
 “ to be here the cause of some little pain, and excite
 “ some transitory concern in you, which may deliver you from an unextinguishable fire ? ”

Be scrupulously careful not to insert any thing in your discourse, that has any air or appearance of satyr : the spirit of satyr and the spirit of God do not agree well together : a preacher who is guilty of this fault, will never persuade or convert his hearers.—The pulpit is not a place thus to satisfy that inclina-

tion, which is so natural to us, of censuring and criticizing; we appear in it, in order to move and change the hearts of men. Not that we are forbidden to make descriptions in the pulpit: Christian eloquence not only allows, but requires this: but then our hearts and tongues should be animated with a Christian zeal, not with a spirit of sharpness, with passion and censure. Let your descriptions be applicable to all the world, but not applied to any one particularly. Exclaim and thunder against vice, but spare and respect persons. It is not allowable for the Christian orator to ridicule, I do not say persons, for this would be criminal in him, but even vice itself.—He should render it as odious as he can by his descriptions of it, and not ridiculous. Otherwise instead of performing the part of a preacher, he acts that of a comedian. Imitate the old philosopher, who knew so well how to season his discourses with all the graces of eloquence. His air was serious, but not sour, his presence created respect without a mixture of fear, his extream politeness equalled the purity of his manners, he made war against the vices of men, not against the men themselves, he reclaimed those that were in error without insulting them.—There is no persuading a man by laughing at him and his defects, or by railing at them in abusive terms. One malicious or satyrical touch coming accidentally from you, is sufficient to set the whole assembly against you. It is to no purpose to harangue a hearer, whom you have thus made your enemy; you will be sure to gain nothing upon him. For as soon as he begins to hate, he presently ceases to believe you.

What a tender regard does St. Chrysostom express for the persons of men, while he encounters their defects and attacks their vices? If his subject leads him to speak against the luxury and vanity of women, what precaution does he use? “There are those,

“ says he, sometimes among you, who have wives
 “ devoted to the world, fond of all luxurious excesses,
 “ and wallowing in delights ; that indulge them-
 “ selves in an ungovernable liberty of talking, are
 “ inconstant and fickle. It is hard I know for so
 “ many imperfections to meet together in one single
 “ woman : but suppose she is such an one as we have
 “ described, you should consider well how to govern
 “ her. You are surprized perhaps at my speaking
 “ of women rather than of men. I am not ignorant
 “ that there are some men, who are worse than I
 “ have supposed these women to be. But as men is
 “ established in a superiority over the women, the
 “ order, which God hath appointed, makes it ne-
 “ cessary for me to speak here rather of the woman ;
 “ not because I believe her the more wicked of the
 “ two, for such things are sometimes to be discerned
 “ in men as no woman would venture to be guilty
 “ of : Think not then that it is out of any contempt
 “ of the sex, that I propose the women to you. I
 “ declare I am very far from this thought, and the
 “ only reason of my doing so, is, because this ex-
 “ ample is more suitable to my subject.

It is not sufficient to admit nothing in your discourse
 that may draw upon you the aversion and hatred of
 your hearer : You should farther be acquainted with
 the art of introducing every thing into it, that may
 procure his friendship and good-will. When once
 you have won his affection, you have half persuaded
 him ; but the great and perhaps only secret to pro-
 cure his affection, is to make him sensible that you
 love him, that you sincerely wish his happiness, and
 that, like St. Paul, you would cheerfully sacrifice
 your life for the salvation of his soul. Then you
 may with good assurance of success exhort, excite,
 beseech and reprove him : Every thing you say will
 be well received ; what is there, that we should not
 readily do to persuade our hearers that we love them ;

we should forget nothing that is conducive to this end, no effusions and overflowings of the heart, no testimony of affection, charity and tenderness should be wanting. Let us imitate St. Paul, who said and did every thing, that he might make himself beloved by those, whom he was desirous of gaining to Jesus Christ, and might persuade them that they were beloved by him. "O ye Corinthians, he cries, our mouth is opened unto you, our heart is enlarged. Ye are not straitned in us, but ye are straitned in your own bowels. Now for a recompence in the same, I speak as unto my children, be ye also enlarged. Would to God you could bear with me a little in my folly; and indeed bear with me. For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy.—Wherefore? Because I love you not? God knoweth. —I say the truth in Christ, saith St. Paul to the Romans, I lie not, my conscience also beareth me witness in the Holy Ghost, that I have great heaviness, and continual sorrow in my heart, for I could wish, that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren. I beseech you, says he to the Galatians, be as I am; for I am as you are.—Where is then the blessedness ye spake of? For I bear ye record, that if it had been possible, ye would have plucked out your own eyes, and have given them to me. Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. It is meet for me, saith he to the Philippians, to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart. For God is my record, how greatly I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ. Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy and rejoice with you all.

Let us learn after the example of this great apostle, to intermix in our discourses these ardent expressions of an evangelic charity. What impressions must such sentiments as these springing from a heart warmed with zeal, make upon the hearers?

St. Chrysostom the great imitator of St. Paul's charity as well as of his eloquence, cannot be satisfied till he has convinced his hearers, that he has all the sentiments of the most lively tenderness for them: "I conjure you, my brethren, says he, to
 " receive us with affection, when we enter into this
 " place. When we say to you, Peace be with you;
 " answer, And with thy spirit; but with heart rather
 " than lips, and with sincere wishes, rather than the
 " formal sound of words only. If after you have
 " said publicly to me, Peace be with thy spirit, you
 " notwithstanding at your return home, make war
 " against me, and pursue me with all sorts of injuries, calumnies and outrages, what must the world
 " say of this peace, which you have given me in the
 " church? For my own part I assure you, that
 " though you should speak all imaginable evil of me,
 " I would still continue my most sincere wishes for
 " your peace; I would still preserve the most pure
 " affection for you: For I am sensible that I have
 " all the bowels of a true father towards you. If
 " upon some occasions my reprimands are a little severe, they proceed from a zeal for your salvation:
 " But when I believe, that in private you speak reproachfully of me, and that too in the very house
 " of God you do not hear me with a spirit of peace;
 " I am very much afraid of your encreasing my affliction, not by endeavouring to blacken me with
 " calumnies, but by rejecting the peace I offer you,
 " and by drawing the punishments upon yourselves,
 " wherewith God menaces all those, who despise
 " the preachers of his word. Though I do not shake
 " off the dust of my feet against you, nor withdraw

" from your society ; yet the sentence which Jesus
 " Christ hath pronounced against you, remains firm.
 " For my own part I will not cease to continue my
 " good wishes of peace to you ; if you reject them
 " with contempt, I repeat it once more, I will not
 " shake off the dust from of my feet against you.—
 " Not that I would in this point disobey my Saviour,
 " but because the charity wherewith he has inspired
 " me for you, would restrain me. I am no longer
 " at liberty to forsake this church ; here I am neces-
 " sarily to abide, and suffer to the very end of my
 " life. Receive us therefore, as St. Paul said to a
 " people, whom he conjured in these words to admit
 " him ; not to their table, but within their hearts.
 " This, my brethren, is all we ask of you, we
 " desire nothing at your hands but this ardent charity,
 " this sincere and real friendship. If you refuse to
 " love us, at least be kinder to yourselves, and re-
 " nounce that unhappy indifference, with which you
 " are possessed. It will be sufficient consolation to us
 " to see you improve, and make a progress in the
 " ways of God : My affection to you will appear
 " much greater, when all the demonstrations of it
 " meet with no returns of love from you. We give
 " you what we have received, and while we make
 " this present to you, desire nothing from you, but
 " your love : If we are unworthy of it, yet however
 " love us, and perhaps your charity will make us
 " more deserving of it.

Is it possible to forbear loving that pastor, who
 professes so tender and disinterested an affection for
 us ? And if we once love him, is it possible not to
 be persuaded by what he says to us ? Nothing is so
 eloquent, nothing so persuasive as the mouth of that
 person whom we love.

CHAP. XIX.

Of the Christian Orator's respect for the word of God.

BUT what profound respect and religious veneration should the christian orator have for the word of God, whereof he is the minister and dispenser? As it is his duty to know better than any other person the full majesty and grandeur of it, it is his duty likewise to pay a greater respect to it. "Heaven and earth were silent, the mountains were shaken; I tremble, says St. Austin, at the bare sight of these adorable characters, I am seized with terror, but with a respectful terror, and a trembling that proceeds from love."

If you respect the word of God as you ought to do, endeavour by your discourse to keep up the majesty and grandeur of it. Learn the art of representing it to the people's eyes with all its beauty and magnificence, that it may lose nothing of its true value in your mouth. Do not debase it by your style; this, in order to be suitable to the word of God should be noble and sublime; the low and middle style is by no means becoming it.

I see nothing more proper, as I have said before, to give your style that sublimity, which is worthy of God's word, than the reading of the prophets. In these divine orators, who were warmed and transported with the Holy Spirit, we find such turns, figures and expressions, as the prophane never could arrive at.—Is it possible to read them and understand what we read, without breaking out into this exclamation with

St. Austin, " O inimitable eloquence, the peculiar perfection whereof is, to be so much the more terrible, as it is more pure, and so much the more vehement, as it is more solid ! " There should be something terrible and amazing in the christian orator ; for the matters which he is to speak of, are generally of this nature ; and it is the indispensable duty of an orator to proportion his style to the subjects which he handles. Now the sublime style is absolutely necessary to infuse horror and consternation into the minds and hearts of men.

It is a part of this respect which is due from you to the word of God, never to blend it with any other which has no relation to it. Such a mixture would not do it any honour : It might indeed render it contemptible to the people ; for they not sufficiently distinguishing what is the pure word of God from what is not, would include both one and the other under the disadvantageous idea which they might conceive of them : To which we may add, that this disrespectful medley, would weaken the wholesome impressions of the word of God upon the minds and hearts of men. For God has annexed to his word, only the grace of a saving persuasion ; it is the property of this alone to shake the wilderness, and break the ceders of Lebanon, and not of our voice, how loud soever it may be ; nor of our reasonings, with what strength soever they may be conceived ; nor of our expressions, how lively and sprightly soever they may appear. These are weak instruments indeed ; unless the grace of God gives life and force to all these qualities, what should we do ? Nothing but beat the air with an empty sound of words.

There are two things to be distinguished in the word of God, which we preach : First, the external and sensible word, which proceeding out of the preacher's mouth, strikes the ears of those that hear

it; by means whereof the image of the truths of christianity is conveyed as through a channel, into their very minds. Now this word as sensible and external as it is, is yet divine; because it is either composed of the same terms and expressions which God himself makes use of when he condescends to speak to us; or because it represents to us those truths only which have been uttered by the mouth of God himself: But this, as I may say, is but the body of God's work. Secondly therefore, there is an interior secret word, which is the soul, which strikes the mind and heart in proportion as the exterior word affects the senses: And this is that grace which animates and keeps up the force of the external and sensible word.

Two preachers, says St. Austin, speak to you at the same time, and act both upon your mind and heart, one without you and visible to you, the other within you and invisible. For the amiable and merciful providence of God has been pleased to annex what we call actual grace with the preaching of his word; I mean certain beneficial illuminations of the understanding, and holy inspirations of the will.—It is of consequence to comprehend rightly this point of doctrine, which includes the whole mystery of evangelical preaching.

When the preacher's voice strikes your ear, it gives birth to certain thoughts which arise that instant in your mind upon the subject of the truths that he has declared to you and creates certain motions in your heart, which depend upon the impression that his voice, his action, his expressions, his images and proofs make upon you, while God on his part produces other thoughts and motions in you, which make you perceive and understand these truths after such a manner as surpasses the power of the preacher, and every thing else; which sublime and supernatural manner of instructing and affecting you, is called

actual grace. May it not after this be said, that the word of God published by the lawful ministers of the gospel, is a kind of sacrament in the christian church, since it is an exterior and sensible sign of an interior and invisible grace?

Not that there is any connexion or natural dependence between the thoughts and sentiments which the word of God that we preach may excite in you, and the sentiments that grace may perhaps at the same time effect; this we are far from either saying or thinking: we acknowledge that these thoughts and salutary motions are absolutely independent of all the efforts of human eloquence: and that if grace is almost inseparable from the word of God, it is his good pleasure to appoint it so; and that this mysterious union is the pure work of his will; an union that does not at all strike at the absolute independency of grace. And this is what infinitely heightens the merit, excellency, force and majesty of the ministry of God's word.

It is also upon this solid foundation that we say with confidence to you, Be diligent hearers of the word of God, and you will be instructed, affected and converted: because the word of God proceeding from the mouth of his preachers, will be a happy opportunity for grace to instruct, move, and reform you: for herein consists that power which breaks the most obdurate hearts, and that mysterious unction which triumphs over them. If this be the appointment of providence, it is, you will say, of little importance, whether the preachers whom we hear are good or bad: good or bad they will touch us equally and enlighten us, it being the grace of God which does this without any dependence on the preacher. But this is a wrong consequence: for though that grace which invigorates the word of God and animates it, be absolutely independent on the preacher; yet it does not follow, that it should be indifferent to

you, whether the preacher whom you hear be good or bad, supposing you had regard only to the interests of your salvation. My reason is this, a bad preacher either will not preach the word of God, or will preach it ill: if he does not preach it, you have no grace to expect this way; because God has annexed it only to his word, and not to the word of men: if he preaches it ill, he is so far from opening as I may say, a passage to grace, that he closes the avenues against it. For the mind is by this means apt to wander for want of application, or is amused with some vain pleasure, or distracted by foreign images, or overwhelmed with tediousness and loathings:—And are not these so many obstacles to grace? but nothing like this is to be feared from him who is able to discharge his function like a worthy minister of the gospel: for he will preach nothing but the word of God to you, and that in such a manner as to remove far from you all obstacles to grace, and inspire you with a thousand thoughts and good sentiments, which will be so many opportunities of receiving grace and salvation. Happy are the people to whom the Lord vouchsafes to send preachers of this character.

But what do we call the word of God? In the first place, I call so, all the truths contained in the divine writings: in the second place, all the terms, expressions and figures which God himself makes use of to represent them to us. In the third place, all the necessary indispensable consequences that follow from these truths, as from their principles. When we make discourses which are but one texture and chain of all these things, we may boast, with submission to the Lord, of preaching the pure word of God.—But the preachers, it is said, mix something in their sermons always of their own. What is it that they thus confound with the word of God? If their own thoughts, and reasonings altogether human, if opinions liable to dispute and contest, they do ill; for

by this means they cease to preach the word of God with purity, in as much as this prophane mixture corrupts and changes it: but if they mingle nothing in their discourses, but the particular graces which proceed from the order, disposition, and exact proportion of all the parts wherewith they are composed, with an inexpressible sweetness of style, free from all affectation, and with an unaccountable harmony which pleases the ear without soothing it too much, &c. if withal, they are so discreetly cautious as to intersperse in them no more of all these than is necessary to make way for the more easy admission of these truths into the mind and heart, such a mixture no way diminishes the purity, majesty, and energy of God's word: and without such a judicious mixture, what would be the fate of preachers? Who would think of coming to hear them? Would not truth uttered by them without any ornament, be disagreeable? There is a necessity they should adorn without painting it, that they should endeavour to please us in order to bring us near to God. For if the Devil makes use of pleasure to destroy us, shall not they be permitted to employ it in order to our salvation? And shall it be objected as a crime to them, if after the example of the prophet Ezekiel, they form a kind of concert with their discourses, whereby to engage our minds, our ears, and more particularly our hearts?

How unaccountable therefore is the taste of the generality of our hearers? If we preach to them unartificially and unpolitely, they grow sick of us, forsake and condemn us to a country village: if we preach to them in a studied and polite manner, according to the rules of rhetoric, they complain that we do not preach the word of God with simplicity, that we have recourse to artifice, and to the beauties of human eloquence. Let them inform us in what manner they would have us preach to them, and we

will willingly comply, provided we may convert them by preaching as they think proper. There is a medium they will say, it is true : but is this medium above all the efforts of human wit ? Is it a point of perfection that is unattainable ? Shall we never come up to their expectations and desires ? It must be acknowledged to the honour of our age, that if ever this satisfaction was given, it is at present.

It is an argument of the little respect we have for the word of God, inconsiderately to attribute such a meaning to it, as is different from that it naturally has : it is not allowable for you to fix any other sense upon it than that which the Holy Spirit designed.—Your rule in this particular is the authority of the church, and the opinion of the fathers. Every explication purely arbitrary, every application wherein the preacher endeavours only to shew his wit to advantage, is unbecoming the majesty of the divine word.

But do they respect it, nay, do they not rather prophane and prostitute it, who make it an instrument of raillery, defamation and diversion to the people ? When we amuse ourselves with entertaining the public, we think very little of converting them. If ever it is becoming to be serious, it is certainly in the pulpit : there never was a theatre more improper to make men merry. For does any thing require to be more seriously treated of than Christian morality ? Men are not to be converted by making jests, and creating laughter ; but by affecting, terrifying and extorting tears from them. If it had at any time happened that St. Chrysostom had said things which were capable of exciting any emotion of mirth in his hearers, how does he recover himself from this sort of slip, which he was sensible he had made ? With what turns does he endeavour to raise the meanness of his matter which seemed of itself inevitably to confine him to a low and abject way of expressing himself ?

It is said that the perfection of nature never appears with more advantage, than in its minutest works : It is the same with the orator ; he never appears greater, than when he shews his art in giving strength and spirit to mean subjects, notwithstanding the disadvantage of their meanness ; because the lower the subject, the more noble and elevated is the genius of the orator.

CHAP. XX.

Of the Christian orator's respect to his own character and to truth.

THE Christian orator can never too much respect his character, if he has the least thorough insight into the dignity and grandeur of it. Let him never say or do any thing, that may make him contemptible ; for every contempt of the person immediately falls upon the character. If possible there should be nothing mean and despicable in his whole person. Every thing in the orator should be noble, majestic, and apt to prejudice men in favour of him. If nature has not furnished him with those conspicuous qualities, the sight whereof alone is sufficient to prepossess us, let him endeavour to supply the place of them with those of the mind. Let him, after the example of St. Paul, set off the meanness of his outward appearance with the greatness of his genius, and make satisfaction to his hearers for the pleasure wherewith he cannot entertain their eyes, by the beauties, the graces, and charms of his discourse :

they will then soon forget how he is made, and consider only what he says.

It were to be wished that something more than human might appear always in the person of the preacher. It is written in the fourteenth chapter of the Acts, that St. Paul, and St. Barnabas, shewing themselves at Lystra and Lycaonia, were taken by the inhabitants, one for Mercury, the other for Jupiter. The sacred historian observes that they took Paul for Mercury, because he was endowed with the gift of speech and eloquence, but tells us not the reason why Barnabas was taken for Jupiter. St. Chrysostom supposes it was because of the height of his stature, and the majestic air of his countenance.

The famous author, from whom we have the description of that philosopher and orator both together, whom we have already mentioned, adds these farther particulars, which we have here a proper opportunity to take notice of : his discourse, says he, is copious and diversified : above all it is soft ; but the sweetness of it is such as shakes, and prevails over the most obstinate. His outward appearance is answerable to the qualities of his soul, his stature is of the tallest, his face agreeable and handsome, his hair long ; these exterior advantages, which are owing purely to fortune, how indifferent soever they may seem, do however heighten his merit, make him more respected, and consequently more eloquent and persuasive.

If the Christian orator should respect the public, which he speaks to, the word of God which is declared by him, and his own character, the greatness whereof is by all means to be supported by him, I will venture to say, that it is still more his duty to respect the truth, whereof he is the depository and guardian. One principal obligation incumbent on

him is to know perfectly every christian and evangelical truth, to be acquainted with the full extent, and search closely into all the consequences of it.

Whoever is ignorant of the truth and amuses himself with running after opinions, will in the judgment of a great master in the art of speaking well, always compose very weak and ridiculous discourses. Draw this knowledge from the fountain-head, I mean, from the fathers, councils and scriptures.—Be not satisfied with some distant streams, which you may meet with in your way: Take that advice, which the Pharisees gave a doctor of the law, “Search the Scriptures.” Devour, like another Ezekiel, this divine volume by continually meditating upon it, and God will assist you in the understanding of it: A reputation of learning and probity well established is to be the solid foundation of that confidence, which the hearer ought to have in you: It is necessary he should believe you to be of a capacity sufficient to secure you from being deceived, and of integrity enough to keep you from any inclination to deceive.

Take care not to destroy this confidence, without which you never will prevail over the hearer’s mind, by a desire of exceeding the truth in every thing you say; which is a mistake that many every day fall into. For it is pretty fashionable in the present age for men to endeavour by this means to acquire the reputation of severe preachers: this they believe is for their honour, and procures them a more favourable attention; they flatter themselves with a persuasion, that the more rigid they appear, the better men they are believed to be; and herein they accommodate themselves to the taste of their hearers. For the more vicious and corrupt they are in their manners, the more they love, and the better they are pleased to have morality carried to an extreme:

Because they are pleased to have it represented to them with such severity, as may make it seem impracticable, which is an encouragement to them in their libertinism. Are we so very blameable, say they, if we do not perform what we are told is so difficult, and almost impossible to be put in practice? The preacher too in his turn finds his account in it. To preach the severity of morality, and at the same time lead an austere life would be a little too much: What does he therefore? Why he reserves an easy life for himself, and the strictness of morality for the public.

Preach if you please the severity of morality in its full rigour; but do not carry it to an extreme: The maxims of the gospel are severe enough of themselves, and in their own nature, without a necessity of your adding new degrees of severity to them, which they have not received from Jesus Christ. Learn only to explain them well, and make men sensible of their extent and obligation, and you will always seem severe without ever varying from truth. Why should you have recourse to falsehood in order to procure the reputation of severity? If it be not allowable to enlarge the way to heaven, will it be more allowable to straiten it? If it be a crime to take off those burdens from mens shoulders, which Jesus Christ hath laid on them, is it not one likewise to be desirous of loading them with others, of which he hath eased them? Never be severe at the expense of truth: The preacher who strains things to such an excess terrifies, frightens and disturbs men's consciences, but does not convert them. Never flatter your hearers, but be sure likewise not to drive them to despair.

May God, says St. Austin, avert that calamity from his church, which the prophet Jeremy lamented formerly in these terms, "A wonderful and horrible thing is committed in the land, the prophets prophesy falsely, and the priests bear rule by their

means, and my people love to have it so : And what will ye do in the end thereof ?” As for us, continues this father, I am content that the things we say should be less intelligible, less agreeable and affecting, but let them be always true ; and let not the people, much less the Minister of God, be ever guilty of so criminal a folly, as to lend a favourable attention to iniquity and falshood.

The christian orator should be so far from discouraging his hearers by a severity beyond measure, that he should on the contrary win upon them by a charitable condescension. It is his duty to adapt himself to their weaknesses, as much as his character of an ambassador of Jesus Christ will give him leave ; nothing certainly is so proper to engage the mind and heart.

A preacher who at first requires too much of his hearers (I say too much, not with respect to the obligations of christianity, but to the dispositions of their own hearts) runs a great hazard of obtaining nothing from them. It is the effect of great art, as well as of the most perfect evangelical charity, to stoop low to them, in order afterwards to raise them the more easily to us, and sometimes above us.

Not only that which is false, uncertain, dubious, or probable, but even that which is true, unless the truth of it be more than human, should never proceed from the christian orator's mouth, which is designed only to be the instrument of publishing the supreme, eternal, and immutable truth. Let no respect to any part of mankind, no worldly consideration ever induce you to conceal, disguise, or dissemble any evangelical truth that is proper to touch and convert the minds of men. What a consolation will it be to you, if at the end of your uneasy course, at the hour of death, you may call all your hearers to witness, while with St. Paul you give yourself this testimony, “ I am

pure from the blood of all men ; for I have not shunned to declare unto you all the counsel of God."—There is a noble assurance not to be expressed, which when tempered with modesty and guided with discretion, becomes every one who speaks as on the part of God.

CHAP. XXI.

The conclusion of the work ; wherein every thing required of the Christian Orator, is founded solely on the end of his Ministry.

I Shall conclude all my reflections with this great rule : we shall judge of the good or bad taste of that eloquence which is peculiar to the pulpit, with regard to the end which is essential and proper to it. It is an argument of your having a good taste, if in the composition of your discourses, you make use of such means as may contribute to the attainment of this end ; if you do not make use of them, your taste is bad. All that we have said in this work, and all that we require of the Christian orator, is founded solely on the end of his ministry.

Why are we willing to prevail with him to join the conviction of the heart with the persuasion of the mind, and not to be satisfied with instructing his hearers, without affecting them ? Why ? But for this reason ; because the motion of the heart inclines the will much more strongly towards the object proposed, than the light of the mind.

Why do we desire that he should himself have a sense of what he says, and never speak without it? Because if he has not himself a sense of what he says, he never will induce his hearers to have any; and if they have it not, they will never be touched or persuaded.

Why would we have an air of liberty run through all his discourses, and such an easy freedom as is no way prejudicial to the accuracy and exactness of them? The reason is, because every thing that looks forced and strained is disagreeable and tiresome; and whatever is so disagreeable and tiresome does not persuade.

Why would we have a pleasing mixture of variety in his discourses? Because variety keeps up attention, and prevents tediousness, which with inattention is the great enemy of persuasion. For how should any hearer be persuaded, who is not attentive, or is tired?

We desire farther of the Christian orator, that there may be something new and noble, something of the marvellous and sublime in his discourses; for all this strikes the hearer, and forcibly, at it were, and against inclination, convinces him: we desire that with the great and sublime, a place should be reserved always for an amiable simplicity: because besides the natural agreeableness of it, it removes all diffidence and suspicion from the hearer's mind of having any the least thought of imposing on him and surprising him; and sets a mark of candour and integrity on every thing the orator says, by which means every thing he delivers is made credible, and without which, he never could be able to persuade.

We would have him be popular; because without popularity it is impossible for him to proportion what

he says to the common sentiments and ideas of mankind ; and without this proportion, he may torment himself to no purpose ; nothing is insinuated into the mind, nothing has the power of persuasion.

We would have him speak always in a practical manner, that is to say, in a manner which hath of itself a tendency to action : because this, as it is evident, is the only way of speaking, that is capable of persuading men effectually, since it is the only one which continually and directly inclines the hearer to act.

Lastly, We would have his action to be always brisk and lively, but withal easy and undisturbed ; to be diversified but equal ; an air of modesty should appear over his whole person, in his voice, and in his expressions, &c. We would desire of him to forget nothing that may be of service to engage the friendship and confidence of his hearers, to have an inviolable respect to the public which he speaks to ; for his character, to which he should do honour ; for the word of God, whereof he is the minister ; and for truth, whereof he is the publisher to the world. But why do we require all this of the Christian orator ? because without it, he never will be able to persuade and convert men.

You will now very easily discover what is wanting in the generality of preachers. They very often want emotion, and make it their chief endeavour to instruct, rather than persuade. They want unction, and a sense of what they say ; they speak by idea only, it is the mind and not the heart that preaches. They want an easy freedom, there is too much constraint in every thing they deliver ; they are fond of a too starched and stiff manner of expressing themselves. They want variety, a certain uniformity that creates tediousness, perpetually goes along with them. They want popularity ; they do not adapt

themselves sufficiently to the capacity of the multitude. Lastly, they want the practical part in their discourses; they speak too speculatively. What therefore must you do? In all your discourses join emotion with instruction, politeness with unction, and an inward sense of what you say; accuracy with easiness; variety with exact proportion; strength with sweetness; popularity with the great and the sublime; the moral and the practical part in all you have to say, and you will attain to a good, if not a perfect taste of Christian eloquence.



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